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"THERE ARE SOME THINGS A MAN CAN'T RENAISSANCE, MISS BRISTER, AND ONE IS A BROKEN TRUST," SAID JIM, SLOWLY.

A CITY CLERK.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

JAMES ELLERMAN was twenty-eight, and had been in one office ever since he left school a dozen years before. His income was a hundred and fifty pounds a-year, and did not seem likely to increase very rapidly, for Jim (no one ever called him James), could advance no further in the great business house of Brister and Co., until the death or retirement of one of the senior employes gave a general "move up" for their long suffering juniors, and of this there seemed no early probability.

But Jim did not consider himself unfortunate. He was not a grumbler, and never held forth on the hardships of his lot. He was a tall, broad-shouldered young fellow, towering a head above most of his companions, and with an upright carriage, a fresh, healthy complexion, which told he came of a stock not used to confinement in a

City office and residence in a stuffy if convenient suburb.

Jim had no relations. He could remember nothing of his father. His mother, a gentle, sweet-faced woman, had toiled beyond her strength to give her boy an education, dying just when her son might have been able to save her from further exertion; even now Jim could not think of his mother without a queer kind of lump rising in his throat; the very memory of her made him gentle and considerate to all women, just as the story she had so often told him, that his father was a soldier and a gentleman, had served to make him shun low companions and dangerous amusements.

"Ellerman's a good fellow," said John Brister, the head of the great firm, to his brother Henry; "if only he'd a little capital, I'd give him a small share of the business. He's more brains than most young men, and I should like to make it to his interest to stay with us."

Henry Brister half-smiled. Twenty years younger than his brother, he had neither John's shrewd head for business, nor his kind, honest heart.

"Ellerman will stay right enough," he said,

with a half sneer. "He might be months before he got a better situation than this, and a man who is saving up to enter the Holy estate of matrimony doesn't run risks."

The senior partner stared.

"You don't mean that Ellerman's engaged; why, however, did you find it out? He's as close as wax in general about himself."

"I have met him once or twice with a very pretty girl, and as he has neither sister nor cousin, the presumption is it was his fiancée. Ellerman is far too straight-laced to squire any mere acquaintance about."

Henry Brister was perfectly correct. The young lady he had seen with Jim was the future Mrs. Ellerman, and the pair had been engaged a couple of years before he made his astute discovery.

Emily Moss was a pretty little girl, with pink cheeks and blue eyes; but she was as great a flirt as could be found in the whole of Clapham, which is saying not a little. Her mother was a widow, and earned her living by letting lodgings to single gentlemen, so that Milly had every opportunity of pursuing her favourite pastime, and had had some half-dozen love affairs

before Jim Ellerman came to live in Gander-road, and succumbed straightway to her fascination.

Milly was not a lady, but she knew a gentleman when she saw one. The little coquette recognized at once that Mr. Ellerman was very different from her mother's usual lodgers. She discovered before long that with him flirtation was an unknown art, and whatever love passages came between them would be in deadly earnest. Then Miss Moss reflected she was twenty, she liked Jim better than anyone she had ever seen. He was quite as rich as any other aspirant to her hand, was, in her mother's language "as steady as Time," and "sure to get on."

Milly thought it was high time she "settled," and accepted Jim's offer with the prettiest mixture of shyness and affection.

Things did not turn out quite as she had expected. To marry at once "and live with ma," had been Milly's intention, but Jim Ellerman took a very different view of life.

His father had married young, he told Mrs. Moss, and left his widow utterly unprovided for. What his mother had suffered made him resolve on two things. He would never marry until he could take his wife to a house of his own, whose furniture would be a sort of capital for her in the future, and until he had insured his life for a thousand pounds.

Mrs. Moss applauded him. She told Milly there was more real love in these sacrifices made for her sake, than in rushing headlong into matrimony on an insufficient income and Milly tossed her head and declared Jim was as prudent as Methusalem.

But still she was proud of her lover. As the furniture accumulated bit by bit (Jim hired Mrs. Moss's empty front attic on purpose to store it in) she realized she should "begin" in better style than any of her school-fellows. She graciously went with Jim to look at houses, which like pianos were to be acquired on the instalment system, and withal she made herself so fascinating and charming that poor Jim thought himself a lucky fellow, and never guessed that Milly was miles below him in heart and intellect, and as much able to enter into his highest thoughts and aspirations as a wax doll taken from the window of a toy shop.

One gloomy November day, when the fog was so thick that the gas had to be lighted before noon in the dark City office, Jim Ellerman, returning from his modest "dinner," was unexpectedly summoned to Mr. Brister's private room.

The senior partner was there alone. Henry Brister was often away from business, taking French leave whenever it suited him.

"Sit down, Ellerman," said his employer kindly. "I want you to do a very important errand for me."

He was so long in mentioning what it was that Jim felt it must indeed be something out of the common.

"My daughter returns to-day from a visit to her sister in Paris," said Mr. Brister at last; "and I had arranged to meet her at Dover. Unfortunately I must stay in town to keep an appointment of great moment. My brother is out of the way, and, in short, Ellerman, I want you to go to Dover in my place."

Jim would have been more at home in going to receive a consignment of goods than acting as escort to a strange young lady; but he only said gravely,—

"I will do my best, sir. I have never seen Miss Brister, but I dare say I can find her."

"I will show you her photograph," said the father, opening a locket on his watch-chain and disclosing the face of a girl in the first bloom of her womanhood; a girl with large, soft, velvet-brown eyes, and hair of the same shade, just flecked with gold.

It was not a face to be forgotten, and Jim felt he could easily find out the original from a hundred other women if necessary.

"You must catch the 2.55 from Holborn," said Mr. Brister; "you will have half-an-hour to wait at Dover, probably longer, on account of this fog. You had better bring my daughter on by the next train, and then take her

straight home to Elton. Don't lose any time, for her mother will be in an agony if Gladys is later than she expects her. You'd better get her some tea, and that at Dover. Here's some money for the expenses."

He handed his clerk a little pile of gold.

Jim suggested it was too much.

"You can give me the change," returned Mr. Brister; "and you'll find travelling by those club trains costs something. Of course, Ellerman, I rely on you not to leave my daughter until you have seen her safe to the Priory. You ought to get to Victoria at ten minutes past seven, but there's no telling how late this fog may make the boat. You'd better be off now, for there's not much time to lose. Take a cab to Holborn; if you miss that train you're done."

Jim did exactly as he was bid, and one thing Mr. Brister had not included in his instructions, namely, he sent off a telegram to Mrs. Moss, telling her he might be detained late on business; then he secured a corner in one of the saloon cars of the club train, turned up the collar of his great coat, and reflected that if it was about as wretched a day for a long journey as could well have been found, at least he had never before travelled amid such luxurious surroundings.

It was a run of more than an hour and a half from Herne Hill to Dover.

Jim had provided himself with a paper, but that was soon disposed of, and he leaned back in his corner, his thoughts busy with very many things.

Of holidays Jim Ellerman had had very few; a week in summer, and the four days which Sir John Lubbock's care has granted to toilers at the different seasons, were all the leisure he could boast.

The week he mostly spent at the sea, believing it prevented him from growing fagged and worn out; the four Bank Holidays he took long excursions into the country. He had never in his life been out of England, and for a moment he almost envied Gladys Brister, who had been spending six weeks in Paris with her married sister, the wife of her father's French agent.

Of the Brister family Jim knew very little, his employer not being one of the men who allow their womenkind to invade their office. The story among the clerks was that Mrs. Brister had been a great heiress, and, having no son, had wished her nephew, Denis Forbes, to be taken into the business as her husband's successor.

To this Henry Brister loudly objected, but his opposition had been useless. Forbes came into the office at eighteen, and only left it when he went to take the management of the branch house at Paris, three years before, on his marriage with his cousin, Marguerite Brister.

Jim had liked Denis Forbes heartily; there had indeed been as much friendship between them as could flourish in their very different positions. Jim had spent several evenings with Mr. Forbes, and knew him well enough to feel sure Miss Brister was a lucky woman.

"You'd better stay on in Leadenhall-street a few years longer," Denis said kindly; "but I'll get my uncle to send you over to me when I see a good opening for you in the Paris house. And, Ellerman, I'll give you a word of warning: don't trust Henry Brister further than you can see him."

Jim nodded.

"I wish the chief didn't," he said shortly.

"My uncle will find him out sooner or later; he must have pretty strong suspicions now, for you know he has never signed the deed of partnership."

Jim opened his eyes.

"I thought Mr. Henry was a partner years ago."

"The deed was prepared, but never signed. He draws a very handsome income from the business but has no voice in its management. You need not repeat this, Ellerman; it's not generally known."

That was three years ago, and to the best of Jim's belief the deed never had been signed. "Mr. Henry" came to the office when it suited him, and blustered about there sometimes, but more attention was paid to the quiet orders of

the manager, Mr. Grenly, than to all his loud directions.

Jim himself felt thankful for this; he could not have explained the reason, but he had never been able to like Henry Brister.

Jim wondered a little when his next long journey would be; he had a great hope of being married next summer, and using his week's holiday for his honeymoon. How very nice it would have been to give Milly a trip in the style of his present travelling.

And then he pulled himself up quick. He was a poor man, always should be poor; his utmost ambition would be to earn three hundred a year, his wife must be content with third class journeys and a maid of all work. If he paid his way respectably, and kept a tidy little home, it was all he could hope for.

"It's odd," thought the young man bitterly, "that though my father died when I was only two years old, and I've never set eyes on one of his people, I seem to have got all his expensive tastes. I hate cheap things; beautiful surroundings seem to me what I yearn for, and yet I never was in a really tastefully furnished drawing room, I never in my life lived anywhere but in a dingy London suburb."

Before he met Emily Moss, he had been the dream of Jim's life when he got better off to live in the country and come up to business by train; but Milly hated quiet, and was never so happy as among bricks and mortar. She pointed out to Jim that she should be moped to death; that his railway ticket would cost a fortune, and everything was dearer in small places.

Jim saw the force of the arguments, supposed his wish had been a selfish one, and—gave it up.

"The train is going very slowly, do you think there's going to be an accident?"

This question was put in a very shrill, high-pitched voice by an old lady who sat opposite him, but at whom Jim had hardly glanced.

She was richly dressed in a velvet mantle bordered by fur, her velvet bonnet framed a face which had once been very beautiful, and was still attractive; a powerful face, as though intellect and cleverness had both been united in its owner, and a proud, pale one too. Her expression was sad and just a little hard. Evidently she was rich and used to consideration, but Jim Ellerman as he looked at her decided happiness had not been her portion.

"It is very foggy," he said quietly, "and I think it may be necessary to go slowly on that account, I hope we shall not be late in reaching Dover."

"I don't care whether we are late or not so that we get there safe and sound," said the old lady. "I'm going to the South of France for the winter, and I don't want to be smashed before I get there."

"The fact of our going slowly need not mean danger," said Jim, feeling sorry for her; "and if anyone is expecting you at Dover, they will know it is the fog which has delayed the train."

"There's no one expecting me," snapped the old lady. "My maid's in the next carriage, and there's no one else cares much what becomes of me. It's a mistake when a woman outlives her friends, young man."

"I don't know," said Jim, slowly; "it would be better than having had no friends to outlive."

"That's rubbish, everyone has friends," declared the old lady.

"I don't think I have," said Jim, a little gravely. "I have a few acquaintances, of course, but, except the girl I'm engaged to, I don't think there's anyone to care much what becomes of me."

"Haven't you got a mother," asked the old lady, with some interest.

"She has been dead some years; I have neither brother nor sister."

"And what are you—you need not answer unless you like—but it seems to me if we try to amuse each other, we shan't think so much of the fog."

"I'm afraid I can't amuse you," said Jim, "for my history is most prosaic. I am a City clerk and I expect to be one till my death."

"Hem," said Mrs. Clifford drily, "and you're going to be married!"

"Some day, to the dearest little girl in the world; when she is Mrs. Ellerman—"

He stopped abruptly, and gazed at the change which swept over the old lady's face.

"What name did you say?" she asked huskily, "not Ellerman?"

"Yes," answered Jim, growing more and more perplexed; "my name is James Ellerman, my father was in the army, but he sold out on his marriage. I cannot recollect him, of course, for he died when I was a baby, but my mother used to say I was very like him."

"You are his image; when you got into the train this afternoon I thought the grave had given up its dead, and I saw Jim Ellerman as he was when I parted from him when he went to join his regiment at Cork. He had just got his company, and was one of the youngest captains in the army."

The old lady and Jim had both forgotten the slowness of the train and the dangers of the fog in their conversation.

"I am glad to have met you," the young man said, simply. "I have never seen anyone before who knew my father."

"But you can't be a City clerk," cried Mrs. Clifford, indignantly; "it's impossible. Jim's son—his only son a City clerk. I won't believe it!"

Jim smiled.

"It's true enough. I suppose when you knew my father he was in the army and well off. He was obliged to sell out when he married for his father cut off his allowance, and he couldn't live in an expensive regiment on his pay. He got employment in an office, but he hadn't been used to the confinement of a clerk's life, and it killed him in less than three years."

"I know," and the old lady spoke in a strangely subdued tone; "but your mother had then come into a fortune through an old uncle of hers, who made it at the gold-fields. She was so rich she told Sir James Ellerman she could bring up her son with every luxury, and give him such wealth he would never need to work. She refused all offers of reconciliation from her father-in-law, and declared she would never speak to him."

"You have been strangely misinformed," said Jim. "My mother, Heaven bless her, never had a rich relation in her life. She worked so hard at fine art embroidery to provide the expenses of my education that her sight failed. I was sixteen then. Her dream had been to bring me up to a profession, but I would not let her risk blindness for my sake; and I got into the firm where I still am. In her last years I was able to do a little to repay her care, but not a tithe as much as I longed to do."

"But," persisted Mrs. Clifford, "that message came to Sir James Ellerman. I was with your grandfather when he received it."

Jim shook his head.

"My mother never sent it, madam. She was incapable of falsehood. Besides, I know that until she heard of his death she never gave up the hope my grandfather would do something for me. She felt our poverty for me far more than I did for myself. She always kept me as much as possible aloof from low companions, and taught me that my father had been a soldier and a gentleman, and that I must never do anything he could be ashamed of."

Mrs. Clifford's tears were falling thick and fast. Her handsome old face looked softer than it had done for twenty years.

"I believe you," she said, gently; "and now have you any idea who I am?"

Jim shook his head.

"My father had no sister, or else—"

"He had two half-sisters, Flora and I were children when our mother married Sir James Ellerman. He always treated us as his own daughters. I married his nephew; but I had come home to the Croft a widow before the estrangement with your father."

"You must not speak against my mother," said Jim, "remember that."

"I am not going to. I know nothing of her but the one fact that she was not the wife Sir James had chosen for his son. I was a childless

widow, and I lived at the Croft. Sir James was fond of me because I was like my mother, his dead wife. I did my utmost to soften his heart to Jim."

"Thank you," said the second Jim, simply; "it was a kindly act."

"When the news came of your father's death," went on Mrs. Clifford, "Sir James was very ill. I was nursing him and unable to leave him. We all felt after what had happened, it was better for some one to go to Mrs. Ellerman. A letter, we felt, might be misunderstood. My sister agreed to go. She was younger and far more taking than myself. Flora had gentle caring ways, she has them still. My stepfather and I both felt she was the very person for the mission. She was to offer Mrs. Ellerman a house at the Croft for herself and child; or, if she preferred it, a house near, and a liberal income. I have told you the answer she brought back."

The veins in Jim's forehead swelled angrily. "It was a lie," he said, bitterly, "a black lie."

Mrs. Clifford looked at him strangely.

"It was a lie," she agreed; "but it has brought its own punishment. Flora had two sons, one of whom she hoped to see the heir of the Croft. He died in early childhood, and my stepfather, who always distrusted Flora's husband, never even mentioned her name in his will. The Leighs are a miserable quarrelsome family, always wanting more money than they have, always struggling to worm themselves into my favour. Believe me, nephew Jim, you have had the best of it after all."

Jim smiled.

"I'm glad I've met you," he said, simply, "it's pleasant to remember now and then I come of a good stock, though I am only a City clerk; and it's all so long ago. Aunt Penelope—if I may call you so this once—you can afford to forgive those other people now."

A strange smile crossed Mrs. Clifford's face.

"Yes, I can afford to forgive them now," she answered. "We shall soon be at Dover. Jim, I should like to hear all about you first. What you are doing, and why, if you are really a City clerk you are travelling by the club train to Dover in the middle of November?"

Jim explained his position in the house of Brister and Co., also the rather unusual errand entrusted to him. Mrs. Clifford listened with great interest. She seemed to have forgotten the cruel wrong done by her sister twenty odd years before, and to have thought only for the present.

"I know Miss Brister. She was staying in Hertfordshire only last summer."

"With you at the Croft?"

"No, not with me. My sister's youngest girl was a schoolfellow of Gladys Brister, and they have kept up the intimacy since. I believe the Leighs hope Gladys may marry their son, Norman. He seems so incorrigibly idle, a rich wife is almost a necessity to him, and now I can see the lights of Dover pier, and in another minute we shall have parted. I want you to promise me two things, nephew, first, that you bear your grandfather's memory no ill will. He was cruelly deceived, poor man; secondly, that when you get your holiday next summer, you spend it with me at the Croft."

"I couldn't bear ill-will to the dead," said Jim, heartily, "but, Aunt Penelope, I don't think I can come to the Croft. When you're in London if you let me know I'll be delighted to come and spend an hour with you after office hours."

"The Croft was your father's birthplace, young man," said Mrs. Clifford in a vexed tone. "What's your objection to it?"

Jim flushed, but truth was best, indeed, he would have scorned a lie.

"I don't expect, Aunt Penelope, you know much about City clerks. Their incomes are not palatial, and I'm saving every shilling I can for my married home. I haven't a dress suit in my possession, and I'm sure you wouldn't like your nephew to shock the butler's feelings by sitting down to dinner in a frock coat."

Mrs. Clifford smiled.

"I want you, Jim, not your clothes, so we'll consider it an engagement, and now, good-bye."

An elderly maid, the very picture of an

experienced confidential attendant, came to Mrs. Clifford as soon as the train stopped, and Jim, losing sight of them, asked an official when the Calais boat was due.

"She's due now and overdue," was the answer, "but there's no telling when she'll be in with this fog. Not for half-an-hour anyhow."

So, feeling decidedly hungry, Jim went to the railway refreshment room, and partook of a hasty tea. Then he was back on the pier to join the crowd of anxious people waiting for the arrival of the channel steamer.

She was so late that some serious anxiety was entertained on her account; but at last, a good two hours after she was due, she was descried coming slowly under weigh, and Jim felt a great sense of relief, even while he wondered how late it would be before he reached Clapham. It was now seven, he could not get Miss Brister to London before nine, if they had to wait for the Elton train it would be after ten before he landed her safely at the Priory.

It was passing strange that Gladys Brister should be known to his aunts and cousins. No doubt Norman Leigh was a far more stylish looking individual than her father's clerk.

Thanks to the photograph, Jim had no difficulty in identifying his charge. He explained that business had detained her father, and was relieved that she showed no annoyance at a stranger having been sent to meet her, only saying anxiously,—

"You are quite sure it is not mamma's illness which has prevented him from coming?"

"Quite," said Jim. "He specially said an appointment in the City kept him. Mr. Brister wished us to go to Elton as soon as possible lest your mother should be anxious. As the boat is so late, I will telegraph to the Priory that you are safe and on your way to London."

They had time for this, and for Gladys to swallow a glass of wine before the mail train was ready. There were so few passengers that no one entered their compartment, and the City clerk began to fear their journey would be a *tête-à-tête*. He had not the smallest idea whether to talk to Miss Brister or to remain silent. His experience of young ladies was bounded by Milly Moss, and she had few subjects of conversation other than dress and their own affairs.

Jim took a brief survey of Miss Brister's attire in case Milly questioned him on the subject. It was very different from the gay frills and furbelows in which Milly adorned herself, believing firmly they were all the fashion.

Gladys Brister wore a long, black coat, tailor-made and fitting tight to her figure; the collar and cuffs were of Astrachan, the former turned down to show glimpses of a natty shirt of rose-coloured silk. Her toque of Astrachan set daintily on her bright tinted hair, and her many buttoned gloves finished her toilet. There was not a single bow or frill or flower to be a plaything for the wind, and, as a consequence, Gladys looked as though her journey had just begun instead of having lasted ten hours.

Jim did not understand dress. He always tried to admire the bright colours in which Milly was apt to dress herself; but Miss Brister's quiet costume was far more to his taste. Of course, though she had far more money to spend than his pretty little *fiancée*, she was older too and more sedate, quite a different being from his childish Milly.

Mr. Ellerman was wrong in some of his premises. Gladys was barely twenty, and a good two years younger than Miss Moss. She was grave, because her whole nature was more thoughtful and more in earnest, but in character she was far more truly artless and childlike than Jim's Emily, who, little as the poor fellow suspected it, was worldly and cunning to a degree in spite of her kittenish ways.

Gladys Brister kept silent for the first half-hour of the journey. Perhaps she found it as difficult to start a subject as did the City clerk; but at last she said gravely,—

"It will be nine o'clock before we get to London, won't it, Mr. Ellerman?"

"We are due at Victoria at five minutes past nine. I don't know anything about the Elton

trains; but your parents won't be uneasy, for the telegram will have told them how late the boat was."

Gladys smiled.

"I was thinking of you, she said quickly, "If you go all the way to Elton with me, I'm afraid it will be very late before you get home."

"Don't trouble about me, Miss Brister," Jim answered pleasantly; "I've got a latch-key, and there are trains to Clapham till past midnight. I shall get home all right."

"It is very strange you should have come to meet me," said the girl thoughtfully; "for my brother-in-law, Mr. Forbes, was talking of you only the day before I left Paris."

"Mr. Forbes was a kind friend to me," returned Jim. "I missed him very much when he left the London office."

"He asked me if you were still with papa, and I said I didn't know. You see"—here the girl blushed—"papa never speaks of business matters at home. Denis, my brother-in-law, was saying he wished you could be transferred to the office in Paris. He seemed to think you would like it."

"I should have liked it above all things," said Jim simply; "to see the world used to be my greatest ambition. But I have ties in England now, and could not go abroad."

Something in Gladys Brister's sympathetic face made him go on.

"I have been engaged for over two years, and I am hoping to be married in June."

"But wouldn't your future wife like Paris?" suggested Gladys. "My sister is very happy there."

"It wouldn't be fair on her mother," Jim replied; "my Emily is an only child, and Mrs. Moss is a widow."

"I see."

And Gladys had an admiring look in her beautiful brown eyes which told she appreciated Jim's consideration.

"I must tell Denis when I write that he must give up wanting you."

She talked pleasantly on different subjects, treating the City clerk entirely as an equal; indeed, she told her mother afterwards she thought him one of the most perfect gentlemen she had ever met.

They caught a train very soon after reaching Victoria, and were soon on their way to Elton.

But their journey was not to end so uneventfully. Jim sprang out and handed Gladys to the platform. The girl caught sight of her father and rushed towards him, not noticing a porter wheeling a rather heavily-laden truck directly in her way.

With an exclamation of horror James Ellerman drew her out of danger, but was too late to escape himself. The truck knocked violently against him, and in a moment he was lying stunned on the platform.

It all happened so quickly, the mischief was done before anyone perceived the danger. No one could blame the porter, who was only doing his duty, though it was certainly a late hour for anyone to be travelling with much luggage.

Gladys, a little weary with her long journey, had lost all self-command on seeing her father; to her impatience alone the accident was due; and yet Mr. Brister, looking at her sweet face, could not find it in his heart to blame her.

"Thank Heaven, Ellerman was in time to save you," said the merchant earnestly; "but I'm afraid, poor fellow, he is badly hurt. Fortunately I have the carriage here, and we will take him home at once."

Two porters lifted the still form into the brougham.

John Brister ordered his coachman to stop at the doctor's. He was out, unfortunately; but a message was left asking him to come to the Priory as soon as he returned, and then the carriage drove homewards.

A very few words explained the accident to Mrs. Brister.

"It was all my fault, mamma," said Gladys penitently. "I was rushing to papa, and I was a little confused and tired. I never saw the truck coming. But for Mr. Ellerman's courage it would be me you had to nurse."

"It is quite true, Maggie," said her husband. "Whatever poor Ellerman's injuries are, he received them in saving our child; so I could not do anything but bring him here."

"As though your doing so needed an excuse, John," said his wife gently. "I could not have forgiven you had you taken him anywhere else. He shall have the best of nursing. But, oh! Gladys, darling, will you never learn carefulness!"

"This will be a lesson to me," said Gladys sadly; "but oh! mamma, I shall never forgive myself if Mr. Ellerman dies."

She took off her things, but she had no heart to eat the dainty meal prepared for her; she paced the dining-room in an agony of impatience till Dr. Giles came out of the sick room. Even then he remained sometime closeted with her father. It seemed ages before Mr. Brister rejoined his daughter.

"Well, my darling," he said tenderly; "it might have been much worse. The poor fellow has broken one of his legs, and is terribly bruised and shaken; but Dr. Giles declares there is no danger if he has proper care and nursing."

"Oh, papa!"

There was no mistaking the thankfulness in her voice.

"He must stay here of course," went on Mr. Brister. "He wouldn't get much care or nursing in lodgings; besides, his head is severely bruised, and the doctor says he must be kept as quiet as possible, as he may have brain fever. Don't look so heart-broken, Gladys; in a few weeks' time Ellerman will be as well as ever, and you may trust me to see his prospects don't suffer by his being laid aside."

"But he's engaged to be married, papa. Surely the girl will be frantic."

"I'll send and explain matters to her to-morrow. Now, Gladys, I won't have you fret about this; remember it was a pure accident, and you are not to brood over it. I always liked young Ellerman, and I shall not grudge any trouble his illness causes, so make your mind easy."

Gladys went to bed, but sleep was long in coming. Not till the small hours of the morning did she sink at last into an uneasy slumber, and then it was only to dream of horrors. She seemed to see Jim Ellerman's face, white and still as it had been when she last looked on it, and to hear a girl's sweet voice demand why she had killed her lover.

CHAPTER II.

EMILY MOSS did not need as much pity as Miss Brister had poured out on her.

When Jim's telegram reached Gander-road, she had been arguing with her mother as to whether she should accept an invitation which had just come from an old schoolfellow to take tea and spend the evening.

"I wouldn't go," said Mrs. Moss, persuasively; "the Jenkinases are tidy people, but not quite genteel, and you know Jim can't abide Matilda. He'll be awfully put out if you go."

"Jim can't expect me to shut myself up as if I were a nun," retorted Milly. "I like the Jenkinases, and Matilda's a jolly girl."

Matilda's messenger waited while this went on. Jim's telegram turned the scale. It said: "Shall not be home till very late. Don't sit up." Milly decided if she was home from the Jenkinases by ten, or even eleven, her lover need know nothing of the little expedition.

This programme was duly carried out. Milly went straight to bed on her return, and knew nothing of her lover's remarkable absence till she came down to breakfast the next morning and found her mother bathed in tears.

"Oh, nonsense, ma," she cried, as the widow began to suggest Jim had been run over or killed by some other accident. "He's safe enough. Jim's quite capable of taking care of himself. He's been out somewhere on the spree, and didn't choose us to know about it, that's all."

"But, Milly, dear, he's lodged with me nearly three years, and it never happened before;

besides, James Ellerman's not like most young men, he's as steady as old Time."

"He's much too steady," said Milly, rather dolefully. "Jim can't understand a bit of fun, he thinks a girl should do nothing but make puddings and sing hymns."

"Milly, don't talk against him when he worships the very ground you walk on; besides, it's wrong when one don't know what may have happened to the poor fellow."

"Matilda's young man was at the Jenkinases last night, ma. He's only a clerk like Jim, and his pay's not so much; but they're to be married at Christmas. He says no long waiting and pinching for him. He'll just take a small house and furnish it on the hire system. He's that impatient he won't wait a day after they've been engaged six months. Now, that's something like love. I'm sure I feel quite ashamed when people ask me when I'm going to be married. Matilda said last night Jim couldn't be much of a lover to shilly-shally for over two years."

"He's done nothing of the sort," said her mother, indignantly; "when he proposed to you he told me he'd never marry till he'd a good home to take you to, and that it would be nearly three years before he'd saved enough."

"Well," and Milly drew a long breath, "after his never coming home at all last night, I should think he couldn't complain of my little outings any more."

Mrs. Moss watched her child, sorrowfully, as Milly settled down to the serious task of trimming her new hat. It struck the widow sometimes she had made a mistake in the girl's training. A homely industrious body herself, she had tried to give Milly more advantages; but the result was not successful. Miss Moss spoke more grammatically than her mother, could rattle off a few tunes on the wheezy old piano, and knew how to say a few French phrases (which no French person would have recognised as their own language) but at heart she was far less refined than her mother.

She could make her dresses and trim her hats, but she always contrived that both should appear like a caricature of the prevailing fashion. She loved novels, theatre going and visiting. She never opened a serious book, and had an intense dislike to improving society. How Jim Ellerman, with his broad intellect and natural nobility of mind, could have fixed his affections on such a creature was hard to understand; but then Jim knew nothing of Milly as she really was and never guessed how different was the ideal he worshipped from the living reality.

Milly was so pretty, had such winning ways, that appealed so strongly to his manly love of protecting the weak. He thought her the dearest, simplest girl in the world. Her love of dress and amusement, (which he could not help seeing), he imagined to be natural to her age; when they were married she would be different.

It never struck him that even now in all their intercourse he had to bend to her level. She never tried to rise to his; he was quite contented with his divinity, poor trusting Jim!

When the twelve o'clock post had come, and brought no news, Miss Moss confessed to her mother it "was odd Jim hadn't written"; but even then she did not seem seriously alarmed.

"Something must be the matter," cried Mrs. Moss. "There's a strange gentleman coming in at the gate."

Milly bent her head round to try and see the stranger.

"My!" she exclaimed, "he's quite a swell. What in the world can he want here?"

She was soon to know. The very small servant brought in a card held gingerly between her dirty finger and thumb and announced.

"He's waiting, mum. He wants to see you most pertiklar."

"Mr. Henry Brister," said Milly, reading the card over her mother's shoulder. "That's the junior partner in Brister and Co.; there must be something wrong after all. Show him in here, Bet'y."

John Brister would willingly have come to Clapham himself, but business engagements

made it impossible. Having obtained Jim's address from the manager, Mr. Greenly (the poor fellow was still unconscious at Elton) he asked his brother as a personal favour to go to Gander-road, and break the news to "Ellerman's young lady." The merchant was a little surprised when Henry consented; he had not a very high opinion of his brother, but he never guessed that the latter had admired the pretty girl he had twice seen with poor Jim, and hoped to carry on a flirtation with her during her lover's illness.

Henry Brister was thirty-five, he had never married, but he was always "carrying on" with someone. He was careful not to go too far, not to let anyone have serious ground for thinking he had "intentions." He liked to flirt with a pretty girl. Milly Moss had struck him as very pretty, and as he particularly disliked James Ellerman there was a zest in trying to cut him out.

Henry Brister broke the news of Jim's accident very kindly; to do him justice he mostly was kind to women. Milly cried just a little, but speedily cheered up on hearing there was not the slightest danger (a slight stretch of the imagination this) and Mr. Ellerman would have the greatest care and attention.

"Only he will miss you," and there was a gallant intonation of the voice. "My brother and sister would gladly welcome you to Elton if you liked to go down and assist in the nursing."

Emily looked at her mother. She hated nursing, was of no use whatever in a sick room, but there was the *déclat* of a visit to the Priory.

"I don't think my poor girl is strong enough for that," said Mrs. Moss, "and though I'd do my best for Mr. Ellerman, gladly, I've got the house, and my livelihood to think of, and if you're sure he'll be taken care of, I—"

"You can make your mind perfectly easy on that score, Mrs. Moss," said her visitor, kindly, "and I think you are wise not to send your daughter to the Priory. It is a depressing house, I hardly ever go there myself" (he was hardly ever invited), "my sister-in-law thinks of nothing but her own ailments. My niece is a 'serious' young lady. The Priory would be a dull place for such a bright creature as Miss Moss."

"I'd much rather not go," said Emily, impulsively, for she hated "serious girls" above all else. "I am sure I can trust them to be good to Jim, and if I let myself get moped and dull, there'll be no one to cheer the poor fellow when he comes home."

"It will be a long illness," said Henry Brister, gravely. "A broken leg is a serious thing."

"Jim never ailed anything before," said Milly, sadly. "How strange it will seem to him, poor fellow."

"Now, Miss Moss, you mustn't despond," said her visitor, kindly, "above all things keep up your spirits. I am that unhappy person's bachelorette, so I can't ask you and Mrs. Moss to visit me; but I shall be delighted to bring you news of the patient if you will allow me to call again. It may be more satisfactory to you than letters."

"What a charming man!" cried Milly, when he had departed. "Such polish, such manners, poor dear Jim would never come up to Mr. Henry Brister if he lived to be a hundred."

"Well," said John Brister to his brother, "did you go to Clapham?"

"I went right enough. It's the old story. Ellerman's engaged to his landlady's daughter. The mother's a decent body, and the girl a pretty creature, but it's an awful entanglement."

"He's fit for something better," said the elder man, musingly. "Did you ask them to the Priory?"

"Yes; but the mother can't leave home and the daughter won't go to Elton alone. I have promised to let them have news of Ellerman. I suppose you'll tell him I have been there."

"When I left home to-day it was no use telling him anything, he was perfectly unconscious, but I hope there will be a change to-night. He will have a better chance now Miss Moss is not coming, an hysterical young lady would be a terrible complication."

"Papa, papa!" cried Gladys, as she came to

meet him in the hall. "It's all right Mr. Ellerman has come to himself, and Dr. Giles says now he'll get on grandly."

John Brister had a five minutes' visit to the sick room at his own request.

"Now, Ellerman," he said, with the quiet air of authority he used at the office, "you're not to speak a word, but just listen to me. I'll do the talking, you mustn't worry about anything. The accident was my girl's fault, and terribly she's grieved over it, too. We'll keep you here till you're well again, and then send you for a month's holiday. You'll find your old place ready for you just as soon as you're fit. I've sent down to Clapham. My wife had a fancy you'd like Miss Moss to come and nurse you, but it seems her mother can't come too, and the young lady is afraid to come alone, so you'll have to trust to us."

"It was very good of you," said the weak voice. Ah, how fearfully twenty-four hours had changed it! "You mustn't think her unkind. She is only a child. She knows nothing of illness."

"My dear fellow," cried his employer, heartily, "I think she's very sensible. I asked her to come because I thought she'd fret at not seeing you; but Mrs. Bond is worth a dozen girls as a nurse, and it would have been harder for Miss Moss to be thrown among utter strangers when she is in such distress."

Gladys Brister took the news very differently. "She must be a stick or a stone," she cried, indignantly, "to leave him to strangers."

"My dear Gladys," said Mrs. Brister, "it is a mercy for us. Just think what it would have been to entertain a strange person."

Gladys flushed.

"Miss Moss must be a lady. I am sure Mr. Ellerman comes of a good old family," returned her father. "Shall I tell you a bit of gossip, Gladys? He's related to that long-legged fellow with the violin you would have dangling here in the summer."

"I never asked Norman Leigh to stay," cried Gladys, indignantly. "I can't bear the man."

"Well, I only know he stayed three weeks," went on Mr. Brister, "and I was continually in fear he meant to ask me to have him for a son-in-law."

"He'll never ask you that with my consent," cried Gladys; "but what in the world has he to do with Mr. Ellerman?"

"Nothing, they would both tell you; but as a fact that poor fellow upstairs ought to have had the Croft, the estate Master Norman hopes to come in for."

"He never will. Mrs. Clifford is too wise. I remember now some Ellermans used to live there; but I thought they had all died out."

"All but my clerk. He is the grandson of Sir James Ellerman, a Knight of the Bath, who died some years ago, and left the property to his step-daughter, Mrs. Clifford."

"And have you always known it, papa?"

"Known that Ellerman came of a good family? Well, I expect so. When he came to me a mere schoolboy I had one interview with his mother. When I asked for references she said she had none to give me, but her boy was Sir James Ellerman's grandson, and she had brought him up to be proud of his name. I forgot all about it strangely enough till this accident. You see, Gladys, my dear, with all the clerks I have I couldn't possibly keep each one's family history in my head. I fancy Denis had a very high opinion of young Ellerman, and made friends with him; but Denis could please himself. It wouldn't do for me to invite one clerk to my house, unless I was prepared to receive the whole batch."

"I should like to tell Norman Leigh we know his cousin."

"That would be decidedly unwise, my dear. It is only a half-cousinship after all. Both Mrs. Leigh and Mrs. Clifford have followed Sir James's lead and steadily ignored their nephew."

It was a very tedious illness. Apart from the broken leg, the other injuries needed perfect rest. Mrs. Bond, the Bristers' housekeeper, was an excellent nurse, and devoted herself to the patient; but when three weeks had gone by, and

Jim seemed as listless and dispirited as he had done at first, she took counsel with Gladys.

"I'm sure there's something on his mind, miss," she said, with a sigh. "His leg's mending beautifully—couldn't be better; but his spirits are as low as can be. Dr. Giles says he may be moved to a sofa to-day, and wheeled into another room. Don't you think, Miss Gladys, you and your mamma could come and talk to him a bit. He seems ever so taken with the mistress, and he's that low I'm quite worried."

Mrs. Brister had been to see Jim pretty often and she, too, had noticed his depression. She declared they would make a little festival of his first leaving his room, and take tea with him in the pretty little sanctum to which he was to be taken.

"Don't you think Miss Moss would come now?" asked Gladys, "she would cheer him more than any one, and it will be weeks yet before he is able to leave us."

"I can't make her out," said Mrs. Brister, thoughtfully, "she hardly ever writes. I'm sure it quite hurts me sometimes to see the look on his face when I have to say there's no letter for him."

"I thought lovers wrote everyday. I'm sure Denis did."

Mrs. Brister smiled.

"Your sister had a model lover, dear; don't set your heart on surpassing her. You may get as good a man as Denis, you'll never find a better."

Mrs. Brister's boudoir was on the first floor, its door exactly opposite that of the spare bedroom, and it was here that Jim was to come for change of scene.

In the club-train, reflecting over his strange inheritance of his father's tastes, Jim had said he had never seen a real drawing-room. Certainly he had never seen such a charming room as Mrs. Brister's boudoir; it was not its grandeur which struck the eye, nor the costliness of its furniture, it was the perfect taste, the exquisite harmony of the whole.

The room was not new; it had been furnished for her when she came home a bride twenty-five years before, but all perishable things in it had been renewed with such taste that there was nothing incongruous or jarring.

To Gladys it seemed just the same as when she and Marguerite had been little children and allowed to come in with favourite dolls; really hardly anything then in it remained, but the old familiar look had been preserved.

The room was not large, and the recesses on either side of the fireplace held an ebony cabinet, one filled with old china, the other with books; a writing table and work-stand, a broad, low couch, a few chairs, all perfectly luxurious in their ease, finished the actual furniture; but there was a looking-glass let into the wall opposite the door, and near it a stand of flowers, then some quaint stools, a thick, fleecy rug, and two tiny occasional tables, a few rare bits of pottery were scattered here and there, and the effect was complete.

Mrs. Brister sat in her own low chair by the fire, Gladys by the Sutherland table, on which afternoon tea was spread, and the soft lamp light and the warm glow of the fire lit up the room; the thick curtains shut out all breath of the outside world, and when Mrs. Bond and a footman wheeled in Jim's sofa, the whole scene looked to the poor fellow the very perfection of comfort.

"Now remember, Mr. Ellerman," said Gladys gravely, "I am the cause of your accident, and the sooner you are well and strong again the sooner I shall begin to feel I may forgive myself."

Jim smiled half-sadly; it went to Mrs. Brister's heart to see how little life and animation there was about him.

"You mustn't think it was your fault, Miss Brister," he said simply; "besides how good you have all been to me since. If I had been an old friend none of you could have been kinder, and your father promises to keep my place open for me, so there's nothing to fret about."

"And yet you fret," said Mrs. Brister, who sat next him, putting one of her hands on his in kindly, motherly fashion. "Mr. Ellerman, Gladys

is quite right in saying we were the cause of your illness; I do so wish you could treat us as friends, and tell us what we can do to try and make you happier while you stay with us."

"Nothing," said the poor fellow feebly; "you have been all kindness, you have made me forget sometimes that I have lost my mother."

Mrs. Brister's eyes glistened, Gladys bent over her ten cups to hide her tears, her mother went to the point at once.

"Are you fretting over the separation from Miss Moss? I am an old woman now, but I have a married daughter, and I know what lovers are. Do you think Mrs. Moss and her daughter would come down just for the day if they could not stay longer? You know Elton is no great journey."

Poor Jim!

He longed for a sight of Milly's face, for the touch of her lips; he was just as foolishly as fondly in love with her as ever, and yet he realised perfectly how different she was from Gladys and her mother. He knew that his kind nurse, Mrs. Bond the Bristers' housekeeper, was superior to his landlady in education, and yet he wanted Milly so very much, his whole heart cried out for her. Someone came to call, and Gladys had to go to see them; perhaps it was better so, alone with Jim Mrs. Brister could speak more freely.

"Forgive me," she said gently, "are you grieving because so few letters have come lately? You must have patience; some young girls can't pour out their hearts on a sheet of paper. It does not mean she has forgotten you, or is not anxious about you."

"If she would only write herself," breathed Jim; "her mother is a good soul, but I'd rather have one line from Milly."

"And is it long since she sent you one?"

"She has never written at all, never once. Mrs. Moss says she is terribly upset, and I must have patience."

Preaching patience to a man who had just been within an ace of brain fever! Maggie Brister had no very kindly thoughts of Miss Moss just then, but for Jim's own sake she kept back her feelings.

"My dear Mr. Ellerman," she said, "letters are not very satisfactory things, they say so little, it will be another month *quite* before you are able to return to Clapham, will you let me go and see Miss Moss and ask her to return with me if only for a few hours?"

"It is so good of you," said Jim, "but you are not strong and it is a long way."

"Not further than I can manage—well, shall I go?"

Jim still hesitated.

"She's a dear little thing," he said slowly, "the sweetest, most artless soul Heaven ever made; but, Mrs. Brister, she and Mrs. Moss are not like the people in your world. My Milly's too good for me, but she—might not be grand enough for you."

Mrs. Brister smiled.

"I'm not particularly grand. Well, Mr. Ellerman, shall I go—to-morrow, if it's fine, if not, the next day?"

"It would be, oh, such a boon," he answered. "I had this letter two days ago. I haven't answered it. I can write a little in pencil, you know, but it wanted thinking about; and when I tried to think my head went round. Please read it"—he was holding it out with his wasted hand—"you know, I don't believe it's Milly's doing—but her mother's."

To do poor Mrs. Moss justice, she had refused point blank at first to write the letter, declaring it might be the death of Jim in his weak state; but Milly retorted in that case she should write herself, and the mother, poor woman, thought perhaps she might soften the blow in the telling.

It was a very short letter, badly expressed, in some places even badly spelt, but its meaning was sufficiently plain.

After such an accident (Mrs. Moss wrote) it must be months before Jim was fit for work. For years to come he might feel the ill effects of such an illness. He had no relations to help him, no capital to fall back upon. Milly was a delicate girl, unused to hardships. With such

an uncertain future it would be kinder far to set her free. The engagement had lasted already over two years. It was not fair to waste the best part of a girl's life in hopeless waiting.

Mrs. Brister was not an impulsive or passionate woman, but she would have liked to tear that letter into scraps, and would thoroughly have enjoyed shaking Mrs. Moss. Both vents to her feelings were impossible. For worlds she would not have let Jim guess her feelings. She folded up the letter and returned it to him, saying quietly,—

"You had better not answer that letter. I feel sure Miss Moss knows nothing about it. I will go to Clapham to-morrow and try to bring her back with me."

"Thank you. I am sure if I only saw Milly it would be all right; and—Mrs. Brister, you don't think it's selfish of me to want to hold her to her promise?"

"My dear boy," said the lady, with a sort of choked sob, "if your Milly were my daughter, I should think her happy to have won such a faithful heart."

A smile of deep content came to the thin, wistful face of the City clerk. In five minutes he was peacefully asleep.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. BRISTER, though not an invalid, was far from strong, and had to be careful of herself. Two days of incessant rain followed her conversation with Jim, and made it quite impossible for her to leave the house. Then came Sunday; so that by the time she was able to start for Clapham, it was nearly a month since Jim's accident.

John Brister's comment on her journey was very short.

"Please yourself, Maggie, and you'll please me, but if you want my opinion, it would be the best thing in the world for Ellerman if this girl jilted him; but I daresay he wouldn't think so."

It was a little after twelve when Mrs. Brister's cab stopped at Gauder Road, and not until she had actually knocked at the door of No. 97 did it occur to her she had not yet decided whether to ask for Miss Moss or her mother.

The choice was taken out of her hands, for her summons was answered by a pale, depressed-looking woman, in a rusty black dress, whom she felt sure could be no other than Jim's future mother-in-law.

"I am Mrs. Brister," began the lady a trifle nervously, "and I very much wish to see Miss Moss, if you would allow me to do so."

But the speaker's nervousness was nothing compared to that shown by the widow. She shook as though she had had the palsy; and Mrs. Brister, who had had very hard thoughts of Mrs. Moss since she read her last letter to Jim, began to relent, and think perhaps it *had* been written from real motherly anxiety about her daughter.

"Milly's just gone out"—here the poor woman stopped abruptly—"I'm very sorry. I'm sure, if I'd have known, I'd have kept her at home. She won't be back till six or seven."

"Then will you let me come in and speak to you?" said Mrs. Brister gently. "I have come with a message from Mr. Ellerman. He is still in a very weak, prostrate state, and I am afraid of the consequences to him if I go home with my mission unaccomplished."

Mrs. Moss led the way into the front parlour, and placed a chair for her visitor by the fire.

Nothing could exceed her civility; but Mrs. Brister felt certain of two things—the widow was terribly frightened, and her own visit was not entirely unexpected.

"I'm sure," said Mrs. Moss nervously, "there's nothing I wouldn't do for Jim. He's the steadiest, finest young fellow I ever came across; and when he took a fancy to my girl I was as pleased as though he had been a rich man. Milly's young, you see, ma'am, and I've got a nice, tidy home for her to wait in."

"But yet you wrote to Mr. Ellerman last week that it was his duty to release Miss Moss from her engagement."

The widow said nothing; her fingers twitched, and she did not meet her visitor's eyes.

"Now, Mrs. Moss," went on the lady, "my husband and I consider Mr. Ellerman's accident as, in a measure, our fault, and we intend to bear the whole expenses of his illness. Until he is able to return to the office his place there will be kept open for him, his salary will go on just the same, and while he is laid aside he will not need to spend a penny; so, regarding the matter from a pecuniary view, he will have lost nothing, but rather be in pocket by the illness."

"Which I'm sure is very liberal of you, ma'am, and more than he could expect."

Here she hesitated.

"Maybe you've daughters of your own, and know what girls are."

"But the objections came from you, I understood, not from your daughter."

"I'd better tell you everything, ma'am," said the sorely-tried mother; "I never could beat about the bush. I like Jim Ellerman; I always did like him. But Milly's a bit giddy, and for some months past she's fancied his notions was a bit strict. She's a pretty girl, and one and another has asked her out; and Jim, he holds himself high, and won't go everywhere. I tell my girl it's because he's saving to give her a good home by and by. But Milly's young; she doesn't like it because he doesn't spend money on taking her pleasuring. She thinks they might have married first and saved afterwards. In short, Mrs. Brister, she's been discontented these few months, and then, with Jim laid up and no telling when he'd be back, she's gone her own way. I wrote that letter because she said if I didn't she'd just pack up his presents and break it all off herself; and I thought it would come less painful if he fancied it was my doing."

Mrs. Brister said nothing. She began to think with her husband, if Miss Moss jilted him Jim would have a lucky escape, but then—would Jim think so?

"You mean that your daughter intends to break off her engagement?" she asked.

"Yes. You see, ma'am, the other's a fine gentleman, with heaps of money. He buys her pretty things and takes her about (they've gone to the Crystal Palace to-day); and he's always telling her she's far too good for a City clerk. There's no doubt the moment she's free he'll propose to her, though he's too honourable to speak out while she's vowed to another."

Mrs. Brister doubted the "honour."

"And you know something of this—this gentleman, Mrs. Moss. You would be satisfied for your daughter to marry him?"

"I'd rather she married Jim Ellerman, ma'am. We're not gentlefolks, and, as I tell Milly, the family are very high, and might be angry at such a match. I'm sure, ma'am, when you told me your name to-day it put me all into a tremble. I thought maybe you'd heard of the attachment, and come to remonstrate about it."

"I!" There was no mistaking the lady's surprise. "But what in the world has it to do with me?"

"He's your own brother, ma'am. Mr. Henry Brister, that's the gentleman; and having no son yourselves, it stands to reason he must come after your husband, and you'd have a right to look high for him."

It said something for Mrs. Brister's temper that she showed no anger to the poor trembling little woman before her.

"Henry Brister is not my husband's heir," she answered gravely; "and we should never attempt to interfere with his marriage. He has an income several times larger than James Ellerman's, and he is perfectly free to marry whom he likes—but he must be years and years older than your daughter."

"Only a dozen, ma'am. They'd make a handsome pair; only—it goes to my heart when I think of Jim."

"I came here to-day hoping to take Miss Moss back with me to Elton," said Mrs. Brister; "but I see now she would be no comfort to Mr. Ellerman. Of her flirtation with my brother-in-law I say nothing; but, believe me, Mrs. Moss, she must decide something respecting James Ellerman. She can't play fast and loose with him such

longer. She must either give up Henry or write and break off her engagement to Jim. It would be a blow to the poor fellow, of course, but far better than buying him up with false hopes."

"I think you're right, ma'am," said the other woman slowly; "but you see she's my only one, and now she's got a chance of becoming a great lady, I don't like to stand in her way."

Mrs. Brister doubted the chance, but she turned to a more practical subject.

"If the engagement is broken off Mr. Ellerman cannot continue your lodger. Will you allow me to send you a cheque for the rent up to Christmas, and will you pack his things and send them to Elton?"

"I will if it comes to a breaking off," said Mrs. Moss with a choky sob; "but, law, ma'am, it'll go to my heart. There's an attic nearly full of furniture which he bought bit by bit as he could afford it ready for their new home. He was as good a fellow as ever breathed."

"You will persuade her to write to-night," breathed Mrs. Brister; "every day is of consequence."

"She shall write to-night; and, ma'am, if you have the chance, will you tell Jim it's not my fault. And when my girl's Mrs. Henry, you'll never find me presuming on the connection, ma'am, for I know a lady when I see one."

Mrs. Brister dreaded the task of seeing Jim and facing his questions, since, until Miss Moss made her final choice, it would be best for him not to suspect her treachery.

But things have a knack in this world of happening contrary to our expectations. When she reached Elton, Gladys was waiting for her in the brougham with a white, scared face.

"Oh, mother, dear, I'm so glad you've come. A letter came for Mr. Ellerman by the three o'clock post, and there must have been something dreadful in it, for he fainted away. Bond sent for Dr. Giles who said he must have had some terrible shock."

"I'm afraid he has," said Mrs. Brister, and she told Gladys the substance of what she had heard from Mrs. Moss. "I expect the girl has taken the law into her own hands, and written without her mother's knowledge to break off the engagement."

"How horrible!"

"I am almost thankful. Supposing her mother had persuaded her to wait, the blow would have come later. Do you think Mr. Ellerman could have had any chance of happiness with such a woman?"

"I hope Uncle Henry won't marry her."

"My dear, you need have no fear of that. He is far too worldly-wise; but for Miss Moss being engaged, and, therefore, in a sense, forbidden fruit, I don't suppose he would have given her a second thought; you may depend upon it when he finds she is free he will draw back at once."

Gladys shivered.

"How can people behave so?"

Mrs. Brister did not answer. She was wondering what Milly had said to her lover, and hoping against hope it was sufficient to part them for ever. Better a sharp blow now than a long time of doubts, of hopes, and fears."

Mrs. Brister's fears were relieved that night. When she went into Jim's he asked, feebly.

"Is it true you went to Clapham? Did you see her?"

"I saw her mother. She said there was someone else, a richer man."

"It's that that did it," said poor Jim. "She was so fond of pretty things, poor Milly!"

"And she has really broken it off?"

"Yes; she says she is not fitted to be a poor man's wife, and that she has met someone able to give her every luxury. She begs me not to stand in her light. She need not have feared," added poor Jim, half-bitterly. "I'm not the sort of man to want an unwilling wife."

"And it is our fault," said Mrs. Brister; "but for your going to Dover you would never have been parted from Miss Moss and have been spared this blow."

He shook his head.

"It's better I have found out before I married her that she set money above all else. My father sacrificed his home and family, prospects and

fortune for love, and I am a little like him, I suppose, for I believe love can make even poverty sweet. If I had found out my wife set money above my honest love I should have been ready to kill myself."

"You will accept your freedom, then?" said Mrs. Brister, slowly.

"Yes, she says she has sent back my letters and presents, poor things, by parcel post. I shall try and write to-morrow a line to her giving her her release, and to her mother asking her to send my clothes somewhere, anywhere, so that I never have to enter that house again."

Mrs. Brister had an old servant who had taken a house at Camberwell. By a little arrangement one of her largest empty rooms was secured for Jim's possessions. His clothes were sent to the Priory. The furniture was stored at Mrs. Benson's. A liberal cheque from Maggie Brister paid Mrs. Moss the rent till Christmas, and left something over instead of notice. The widow wrote rather tearfully that she had been treated most "handsomely," and that she hoped Mrs. Brister would be kind to Milly when she became "Mrs. Henry."

The family at the Priory felt not the least alarm at that prospect. They knew Henry so well they were quite sure when he discovered Miss Moss was free he would discontinue his attentions. Only the fact she could not expect him to propose to her had made him so lavish of them.

CHAPTER IV.

GLADYS BRISTER sat at her writing desk with an open letter in her hand. It was from her old schoolfellow, Poppy Leigh, and contained a very pressing invitation to her to spend Christmas at Hetherley the pretty little Hertfordshire village where Charles Leigh had lived ever since his marriage with Sir James Ellerman's step-daughter.

"My dear child," said Mrs. Brister in surprise, "it is an hour since you sat down to answer Miss Leigh's letter, and you have not got so far as the first line."

"I can't make up my mind what to say, mamma. I'm awfully fond of Poppy, and I know she wants me to go. She'll be married in the spring, so this is her last Christmas at home, but—"

"But you don't want to meet her brother Norman, is that it, Gladys?"

"I don't like Norman," said the girl with a burning blush. "I'm not afraid of Poppy's misunderstanding me; but Mrs. Leigh and the other girls will pair me off with him and seem to think I like it."

"I should never let you go to Hetherley if I thought there was any chance of your caring for Norman," replied her mother; "but I'm not afraid of that, and if Poppy wants you—"

"I'm afraid if I go I should be making them think I did like Norman."

Mrs. Brister hesitated. She had one reason, dearly as she loved her child, which made her want to send Gladys from home.

Jim Ellerman was convalescent; his recovery, once begun, had been rapid, and now, only a fortnight after the discovery of Milly's falseness, he was able to sit up most of the day.

Gladys had grown into the habit of spending a good deal of her time with him in her mother's boudoir. She played to him or read the newspaper, and Mrs. Brister began to fear her daughter found these ministrations a pleasure, and to dread her pretty, bright-eyed Gladys, giving her heart to a man whose own had been poured out upon another.

"I don't believe Jim thinks of such a thing," was the lady's reflection; "even if that wretched Miss Moss hadn't given him a lesson in distrusting women, I believe he is too honourable to forget the gulf between his fortune and ours. But I don't want my Gladys to give away her love unsought—better, far, for her to go away for a few weeks. When she comes home Mr. Ellerman will have left us."

"I should like you to go to Hertfordshire, dear," she said at last. "I don't believe Norman

Leigh will propose to you if you show him decidedly you do not like his attention. In such a large family party it will be easy to avoid tête-à-têtes, and I think you want a change; you have been too much indoors lately, so write to Poppy and tell her you will come to her on Saturday."

By some chance no mention was made of Gladys's intended departure before Jim. It came to him as a surprise when, on the Friday evening, as she was bidding him good-night, she said simply,—

"And good-bye, too, for I am going away to-morrow for a month."

"That is news," he answered in a surprised tone; "is Mrs. Brister going with you?"

"No; and I didn't want to leave her so soon again. But Poppy Leigh, my greatest friend, is to be married at Easter, so this is her last Christmas at home, and so I have promised to spend it with her."

"At the Croft?"

"Oh, no; that is Mrs. Clifford's place. The Leighs live at the Grange, a mile off. I believe they prefer it to a house in Hilton, where Mr. Leigh's office is. He is a solicitor, you know; he manages Mrs. Clifford's property; she is his sister-in-law."

Then Gladys broke off abruptly,—

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Ellerman; I quite forgot these people were your relations—do forgive me."

"There's nothing to forgive," said Jim; "it's many years since the name of Ellerman was known in Hetherley. I don't wonder at your forgetting."

And somehow, when Gladys got safely in her own room that night, she broke down utterly, and cried as though her heart would break for no reason that she could have put into words.

Mrs. Brister's fears had not been unfounded. Gladys did not know her own secret, but she did know she felt leaving home this time more than she had ever done before, and that the strongest feeling in her heart just now was an intense anger against Emily Moss.

That young lady's love affairs were not progressing very satisfactorily. When she got Jim's shaky pencil note saying that he released her from her promise and wished her all happiness, she thought he gave her up "much too easily;" when she came home one day and found the front attic stripped of all the pretty furniture Jim had collected for their future home; when a card appeared in the parlour window, and her mother seemed anxious to secure another lodger, she realized that her decision was irrevocable. She had been taken at her word, and her engagement was a thing of the past.

But though she was "off with the old love" was she "on with the new?"

As the days went on Milly did not feel quite satisfied on that head. Mr. Henry Brister had not been to see her *quite* so often; he had not made any more of those pretty speeches about her being miles too good for a City clerk.

Emily Moss had no delicacy of feeling, she had been waiting for an opportunity to tell him she had obtained her freedom for his sake, but if he did not give her an opening she must make it.

Just a month after Mrs. Brister's call in Gander-road Emily went to the theatre with her admirer. She was dressed in her prettiest, and she started with the resolution to come home the future "Mrs. Henry."

They had a private box, but Milly could hardly enjoy the pantomime. She was desperately anxious. What if her companion were not serious after all? What if her mother was right in declaring he meant nothing by his pretty speeches?

It is not four miles from the Strand to Clapham, but Milly decided she must bring matters to a crisis during that homeward drive.

"We've had a pleasant evening," said Henry Brister, unconsciously helping her; "it seems to me, Miss Moss, you and I know how to enjoy ourselves; but I suppose that long-faced lover of yours will be coming home soon, and then our little outings will be over."

She seized upon the opening with almost feverish haste.

"Mr. Ellerman isn't coming back to Clapham at all," she said demurely. "When I broke off

"the engagement Ma said it would be better for him to find other quarters."

"Bless me!" said Brister laughing; "what ever made you break it off? The poor fellow can't have done anything to offend you, seeing he's been on a sick bed for weeks."

"Ma was anxious about me," said Milly, shifting the blame from her own shoulders, "she said I was too young to marry just to be a nurse, and we heard Mr. Ellerman would never be really strong again, so it was better to end things; besides Jim was always a bit too serious, and he'd be worse than ever after such an illness; besides, after all, he's only a city clerk."

Henry Brister listened in amazement. He knew a good deal about women, but he had never heard one of them utter such a worldly, heartless speech.

He was a man of the world, and saw through Milly at once.

She had taken his pretty speeches in earnest, and had broken off with her lover thinking to secure a richer husband.

Henry Brister was not a good man, but he did feel a little disgusted with his companion.

"Very prudent, I'm sure," he said, suavely, reflecting that unless he wished to become entrapped into matrimony he must give this very acute young woman a wide berth for the future. "Very sensible, but a little hard on the poor devil, wasn't it?"

This view of the case did not please Emily at all.

"A woman owes something to herself," she said, demurely. "Since I have discovered Jim no longer possesses my heart I was right to part from him, even at the risk of being misunderstood."

Henry Brister felt positive that in another moment she would tell him he had won her heart from Jim. He positively quaked. Why did the cabman drive so slowly? Why, in the world, had he ever put himself in such a dangerous position? Would they never get to Clapham? Why, positively, they were only in the Kennington-road! A moment's thought and he decided to face the position. He had no intention of marrying Miss Moss.

Even if she attempted to obtain pecuniary redress for her injured feelings the fact that she had been engaged to another man at the time of their acquaintance would protect him.

"My dear little girl," he said, in a semi-paternal manner, "don't you think you're mistaken. If Ellerman possessed your heart for over two years why should he suddenly lose it? As to his accident my people have taken an awful fancy to him, and you may be sure my brother will raise his salary as soon as he goes back to work. Ellerman and I don't hit it off very well, but he's a good fellow, and I'm sure you'd better stick to him."

"You said I was miles too good for him," cried Milly, hotly.

"Any pretty girl is miles too good for any man," said Henry Brister, quietly; "but Ellerman's a steady fellow, and will be sure to get on in time. You'd better make up your quarrel, Milly, and forget your fancies."

"Fancies," repeated the girl, sobbing hysterically, much to his horror. "Fancies, indeed, didn't you make love to me and teach me to care for you? Haven't you told me a dozen times I was good enough for any position?"

Henry Brister began to feel more uncomfortable than ever, but he had made up his mind to hold his ground.

"Now, look here, Miss Moss," he said, gravely, his cold-measured tone checking the hysterical sob as no entreaties could have done. "Just listen to me. Was not our very acquaintance brought about by your engagement to Mr. Ellerman. My brother sent me to Gander-road to break the news of your betrothed's accident. Isn't that true?"

"Yes; but—"

"So from the first moment of our meeting I knew you were not free, and I'm not quite villain enough to make love to another man's betrothed. You are a very charming girl, and it was a time of great anxiety for you. I thought a little amusement would prevent you feeling hipped, and so I came from time to time

and took you out a bit. Beyond telling you that you're too pretty for a poor man's wife (which he would probably take as a compliment) I have never from first to last said a word to you Mr. Ellerman could resent. As to wishing to stand in his shoes, my dear girl, I'm double your age and not a marrying man. My income's eight hundred a year, but I'm used to my little luxuries. I must have my horse at the livery stable, and my glass of old port after dinner. I could no more afford to marry than I could afford to build a church. If you'd been free I might have feared trifling with your affections in giving myself the pleasure of your society, but I knew you were engaged. I thought under those circumstances there was no harm in my trying to give you a little pleasure. Of course, if you have broken it off with Ellerman things are in a very different position. I mustn't come and see you any more for I can't afford to marry you myself, and my visits might make people think we were engaged; and so deprive you of the chance of settling comfortably: why, bless me," he added, in a lighter tone, "here we are in Gander-road."

The deceitfulness of this speech! Had he not counted every turn of the road in his intense anxiety to end the trying interview? He sprang out, gave a thundering rat-tat at the door, shook hands with Mrs. Moss, and would have performed the same ceremony with Milly, but she had rushed past her mother into the house. When the widow, having carefully locked the street-door and put out the gas in the tiny "hall," went into the parlour, she found her child crouching over the fire, and sobbing as though her very heart would break.

It had come home to Milly now what she had done; she had thrown away the substance for the shadow; she cried not for the wrong she had done Jim Ellerman, and the pain she had inflicted on his honest heart, but for the havoc she had made of her own prospects. Henry Brister had only been amusing himself; she would never see him again; for the sake of his idle speeches she had given up the certainty of a good husband and a comfortable home.

She thought of the stock of furniture so carefully chosen, she thought of the little house at Penge being bought so prudently on the instalment system. Alas, house and furniture was now lost to her for ever; she thought nothing of Jim's love, but she did mourn sincerely for the temporal advantages she had flung away.

Mrs. Moss watched her child sadly; she, poor woman, had never felt too certain of Henry Brister's "intentions." At last she went up to Milly and put one hand on her shoulder.

"What's the matter, deary? Tell your poor old mother."

It was a relief to pour out the story, and if Milly coloured it so as to make Henry Brister much blacker than he really was, Mrs. Moss never seemed to notice it.

"Never mind, my deary," she said at last, "the best of us make mistakes sometimes."

"And you'll write to Jim," said Milly, coaxingly; "you could tell him it was your anxiety for me made me throw him over."

But this was more than even patient Mrs. Moss could stand.

"No, my dear;" she answered firmly. "I'll stand by you through thick and thin, I'll slave hard to keep you like a lady, and I'll never throw it up to you that you flung away as true a lover as girl ever had, but I'll not write to Jim; Milly, I'll tell him no lies. I doubt he's suffered enough through you already, poor lad, and I'll not help you to play fast and loose with him any more."

Mrs. Moss had a very bad time of it in the weeks that followed. Milly did not exactly ask her to reconsider her decision, but she sulked, and had continual attacks of "feeling low," which made her a very trying companion; then the drawing-room floor gave notice, and with both sets of rooms empty the widow had a hard struggle to get along.

And then quite suddenly, without a word to her mother, Emily decided to write to Jim herself. It was March now, and no doubt he had left Elton and gone into fresh lodgings, but she had his address in the City and she sent her letter there.

Emily had such supreme faith in her own attractions she quite believed that having loved her once, Jim would be only too thankful to return to his allegiance. She did not exactly apologise for having nearly broken his heart, but she said she was willing to let bygones be bygones and to try again, if he would come back to her.

Having made this very magnanimous suggestion she dressed herself in her best attire, and waited all the evening for the sound of that well-known knock.

The first night she waited in satisfied confidence, the second a little more anxiously, the third hoping against hope; then the next morning came a letter with a French stamp, which told her her efforts were in vain.

Jim uttered no reproaches, said nothing of the selfishness she had shown in trying to recall him. He wrote very briefly, that after having been jilted once, he could not trust her again, and therefore he was sure it would be only misery to renew their broken engagement. He would probably, he added, have to reside for the next few years in Paris, so her dismissal had perhaps spared her the pain of a separation from her mother.

Milly tore the letter into bits and burned them at the kitchen fire; she never told her mother of her attempt and its failure; from that day forward she hated James Ellerman even more bitterly than she hated Henry Brister.

CHAPTER V.

It was the kindest thing Denis Forbes ever did when hearing from his wife the story of Jim's broken engagement he wrote to his father-in-law asking, as a special favour, to promise that Mr. Ellerman might replace the assistant who was leaving him in February to "better himself."

Jim never had to face a return to Leadenhall-street with his altered hopes; he was spared the pain of looking for fresh lodgings in London. As soon as he was well enough to travel he went to Paris, that he might get used to the French capital before his office duties began.

And not only was the change of scene the best thing in the world for his health and spirits, but in Paris he was able to make an entirely fresh start. In London he had been just a City clerk, one of hundreds of a similar grade; the Paris house was not a tenth as large as the London business, and Jim took his place at once as second in command, with only Denis Forbes over him.

His salary was three hundred a year; he paid about a third for board and lodging, and found the remainder, even after he had "saved for a rainy day," ample to keep him as a gentleman.

Denis Forbes had always liked him. Pretty Marguerite Forbes had naturally a strong interest in a man who had been nursed through a dangerous illness at her father's house. The happy young couple made Jim free of their pretty flat near the Faubourg St. Honoré, and introduced him to their friends as an equal. Jim found himself in an utterly new world. Every one he met seemed to recognize him as a gentleman. It was as though, for the first time in his life, he took the place which might have belonged to him had his father lived and been reconciled to Sir James.

And was he happy? Had he forgotten Emily Moss? Pretty Mrs. Forbes often wondered. He never made the slightest allusion to Clapham. He did not shun young ladies. He never made bitter remarks about the fickleness of women; but he was graver far than most men of his age. He seemed to live entirely in the present, and never to make plans for the future. It was as though his hopes had been so terribly wrecked he had no courage to form fresh ones.

"I believe he is still regretting that miserable girl at Clapham," said Marguerite to her husband.

But when Milly's letter, forwarded from Leadenhall Street, reached him, Jim discovered, with a thrill of surprise, that he was cured.

Not only could he answer it without a shade of hesitation, but he realized in every line the gulf between his mind and feelings and poor Milly's.

She was false and selfish to the core. She could not even honestly beg him to forgive her and come back to her even now; and this was the creature he had loved and revered as his heart's best treasure.

"Thank Heaven I was saved in time," was his thought as he slipped his note into the post.

"Come and dine with us to-night, Ellerman," said Mr. Forbes as he was leaving the office. "My sister-in-law has just arrived on a long visit. I asked her if she had helped the porter to knock any one down this time, but she thought not."

Jim presented himself at the appointed time. He and Gladys met as equals now, not as sick man and kindly nurse. He looked at her and wondered why he had never realized before how pretty she was. He wondered if she were really to marry his half-cousin Norman Leigh; and whether his Aunt Penelope, of whom he had heard nothing since their strange meeting in the club train, would leave Norman the Croft.

(Continued on page 189).

FOR EVER AND A DAY.

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CHAPTER VII.

JOCelyn GRETTON had resolved that once he had escorted his cousin to Yelverton, he would return immediately to town to take up the rest of his social engagements which his father's indisposition had suspended for a time.

His leave of absence had expired moreover, and everything combined to summon the young man back to the great city, which was for him now the one and the most beautiful place in the world, for it was the place where Margaret Hilliard was to be found.

Fate, however, did not desire that this resolution of Jocelyn's should be carried into effect.

The arrival of Anastasi Vignetti produced a great deal of excitement and nervous agitation in Sir Noel Gretton, and this excitement was followed almost immediately by another attack of weakness, prostration and illness.

Jocelyn had therefore to telegraph to headquarters for an extension of leave, and to take his place beside his father till the weakness should have passed. He found a tender and gentle coadjutor in his cousin, Anastasi.

The girl was honestly grieved at the effect brought about by her arrival.

"I had no idea my uncle was so delicate," she said to Jocelyn, almost wistfully. "I fear I have been very selfish; I ought not to have come; it has distressed him too much!"

Jocelyn was very sweet and kind to his cousin. "You must not blame yourself, Tasi," he said, taking her slim hand in his, and calling her by the name she had told him had been her father's pet one for her. "My dear, you must not let these thoughts come to vex you. I do not deny that you have brought some pain to my dear father, but the pain belongs to the past, and when once the agitation is over, I know, I am sure, he will rejoice as I do to have you with him. Promise me not to look so sad; I want you to have a bright and happy life in this old home, and to put everything that grieves you away from you altogether."

Anastasi had made no spoken reply to this affectionate speech; her fingers lay in Jocelyn's strong hand, and her eyes—those marvellous eyes—fixed themselves on his handsome face that was doubly handsome with the tenderness that had come upon it.

The girl's expression was curious; she looked at the young man before her with an intensity that was as if it would read him through and through. A sort of blank feeling crept over her as she did so.

Jocelyn was so open, so warm-hearted, so true, there was not an inflexion of his voice, or an expression on his face that was not absolutely frank, and yet—and yet!

"You are very good to me, cousin Jocelyn,"

she said, slowly, when she found her voice, "and if I am not happy here it will be because I am never to know the true meaning of the word happiness. There are some people, you know, born into shadow just as others are born into a world of sunshine. I am a child of the shadow world!"

"Oh! please don't talk like this, dear!" Jocelyn said, with that warm boyishness that was so natural to him and so fascinating. "Why, you are only a baby! What do you know of life? Now I am quite a patriarch compared to you, and so I prophesy that you are going to have a most brilliant and beautiful future—a future of sunshine and roses and laughter and music—a future, when you will be a princess of happiness, little cousin, and you will reign over everybody, myself included."

Jocelyn had left her with a smile as he said this, and Anastasi had stood at the head of the broad old staircase and watched him run lightly down, then turning when he reached the bottom to wave his hand to her before he vanished out of sight.

The girl, in her long black robe of clinging material that fell in straight classic folds about her slender proudly-carried figure, looked like some creature of another period, a mediæval saint, with her pale thin face, and her wavy dark hair worn brushed away from her brows.

Her white hands were locked together, and as Jocelyn disappeared they were lifted involuntarily and pressed against her heart, which was thrilling and beating in a way Anastasi had never experienced before in all her life. She was conscious of a sudden warmth rushing throughout her, and then of amazement, and then of a great chill.

"I knew it would be hard," she said to herself in a dull sort of way. "I knew my path would be set with difficulties; but this I never imagined, never—never!"

She turned and went back slowly along the corridor. The manifold beauties of the house she was in, of the place she was henceforth to call her home, reached her in an indistinct fashion.

Had her mind been free of a great burden—a burden that was to be allied to a great struggle, Anastasi Vignetti must have revelled in the artistic delights offered to her in the study of this old castle, this memento of ages dead and gone, for she was a girl of the highest mental attainments—cultured, intellectual, artistic.

The thoughts that thronged her mind, however, were too strong, too bitter, too complex, to allow her to find the employment she would have tasted under ordinary circumstances, and as she turned and went back to the suite of rooms which had been prepared for her reception and which belonged henceforth exclusively to her, Anastasi was far, very far indeed, from experiencing even a glimpse of that happiness Jocelyn had predicted was to be her possession.

Little imagining what a tumult of emotion raged beneath the girl's quiet exterior, Jocelyn had run downstairs to the library to attend to half-a-dozen letters.

A sigh escaped him unconsciously as he realised the chance of following up that sweet offer of friendship which Lady Hilliard had made him when they had parted at the Duchess's, must now be postponed indefinitely.

It had been a bitter disappointment not to have found her at home when he had called upon her the following day. He had timed his arrival quite late so as to allow himself to hope for a successful visit, and when he heard the butler's quiet voice announce "Her ladyship is not yet returned, sir," Jocelyn felt as though he had suddenly been shut out of everything that made life desirable.

He had comforted himself, however, by remembering that he would have the opportunity of meeting her again very soon at her god-mother's.

The day following his arrival with Anastasi at Yelverton came this second attack of illness to his father; and with a heart that was full of grief and anxiety over his beloved parent, Jocelyn had to set aside that dream of hope and joy that, all unbidden, and yet so strongly, had come

to him, as his thoughts lingered on Margaret Hilliard.

He scribbled a few lines to the duchess; he always sent her news of his father, and he had to write on this occasion to explain why he would be unable to fulfil several engagements he had entered into with her during that memorable and delightful little dinner. He ended his letter by mentioning his sincere regret at not having seen Lady Hilliard before he left town, adding that his regret was the more real since he did not know when he would have a chance again of calling upon her.

Jocelyn would have been tremendously surprised could he have known what extreme pleasure even these few words gave to a certain girlish young widow, who sat beside the Duchess of Caledonia in the well-known ducal carriage the day following, and was given this letter to read by her godmother.

"We shan't see Jocelyn again this side of Goodwood, I am afraid," the duchess said. "He is not like most men I can name. His love for his father ranks before everything; and to give his father pleasure he will sacrifice his dearest wishes. He is a dear, good boy, and I love him with all my heart. I am sorry you were out when he called, Margaret. He is distinctly a friend of whom I approve."

Lady Hilliard folded up the letter quietly.

"I am sorry too," was all she said; and her voice betrayed nothing of what was passing in her heart, of the pleasure and the disappointment mingled that those few written words had brought to her.

The duchess chatted briskly. She was kept busy returning the salutations of her friends and acquaintances as she drove through the park, and her shrewd eyes were quick to see the sincere admiration lavished on the girl beside her, looking so young and so sweet in her widow's weeds.

By and by she turned those eyes full upon Margaret.

"You are very quiet, child," she declared. "And you are looking pale, too. I don't think London agrees with you; or, perhaps it is only the effect of all that heavy black."

A tiny colour stole into Margaret's delicate cheeks.

"I—I don't think London *does* agree with me very well, godmamma," she said hurriedly; "it is so hot—and—and so dusty, and—" she gave a little pause—"Kathleen is trying to persuade me to go down with her to stay with her aunt, Lady Charlotte Monro, for a few days," she went on more hurriedly still, and this time her cheeks were quite, quite red, for dissimulation was something altogether new to her guileless nature.

The duchess apparently did not see that vivid blush, although there was a faint smile about her well-cut lips as she answered Lady Hilliard.

"By all means. A most excellent plan. I know old Lady Charlotte well—an eccentric old creature, but with a heart of gold. A few days in the country will do you any amount of good. Get Miss Bartropp to write and say you will go without fail."

Margaret's pensiveness seemed to vanish all at once.

"Kathleen will be delighted," she said, and she laughed her pretty fresh laugh.

It was at this moment the big barouche turned to leave the park, and a man who was entering on foot, caught sight instantly of her flower-like face.

He took off his hat and bowed low, and with a certain snobbish eagerness, to the occupants of the ducal carriage.

Margaret responded to Mr. Denison's salutation with her usual gracious warmth, but her god-mother's bow was of the most frigid description.

Cuthbert Denison walked on into the park in a mechanical fashion.

The charm that had drawn him thither, making him leave important and valuable work, just for the chance of gazing anew on the girl he was growing to love so madly, so unwisely, had vanished, as she drove away.

His heart was filled with a passionate fire, and yet the sight of her set so high above him, made the fire grow faint and low, and almost go out

beneath the chilly touch of the despair his worldly wisdom aroused within him.

It was the same feeling that came upon him, whenever he saw her driving with the duchess; he knew he was no favourite with that great lady, and as he was, apart from any other reasons; this fact was exceedingly bitter for Cuthbert to swallow, made more bitter still, when he remembered how warmly affectionate Margaret's godmother always was to his cousin Jocelyn Gretton.

Cuthbert had heard nothing as yet of the meeting between Lady Hilliard and Jocelyn; he had been full of nervous apprehension when he was told by his cousin, of the dinner engagement at the Duchess, that one evening when Jocelyn was in town; but he had seen Lady Hilliard twice since, and as she had made no mention of meeting Captain Gretton, Cuthbert concluded instantly, therefore she could not have been the god-child who had been announced to be present.

He was allowing himself to think so much about Margaret, that his usual shrewdness was deserting him for a time, and he was even forgetting to deal in his well cultivated cunning; had it been otherwise, Cuthbert must have remarked a slight though subtle change in Margaret Hilliard, in those two interviews which had followed after the day Jocelyn had arrived in town and had dined at the great ducal house in Park-lane.

Lost in his own thoughts and dreams, Cuthbert saw nothing different, saw nothing but the girl's loveliness, realised nothing but that in her and in her alone, lay his hope of all human happiness.

It must not be imagined however that the man so completely lost his nature as to let his love utterly blind him to the truth of things; Cuthbert Denison did indeed love Margaret Hilliard, but he loved her as much for her wealth, her social status, and the value of all that might be appertaining to him through this, as for her girlish sweetness and loveliness. He had always determined to marry well; to marry money and position too; he had never imagined that he should come across such a paragon of perfection as this one particular girl represented to him; heart, emotion, passion, even had never entered into his matrimonial calculations, but the first glimpse of Margaret Hilliard had brought all these to him, and had made the desire to win this girl doubly powerful and doubly intense.

His satisfaction, indeed, at the prospect of at last being admitted to his uncle's house, was marred by the thought that this journey to Yelverton would take him away from London for a few days, and debar him from seeing Margaret. But he comforted himself by remembering that he was bound by professional duties to be brought into frequent contact with her; and the knowledge that his connection with the Grettons could be henceforth freely and frankly alluded to, was not a point to be dismissed lightly by Cuthbert.

He was to leave town at the end of the week. There was nothing to take him to Lady Hilliard before his departure; in fact, he had no occasion to see her at all for the next fortnight or so, and of this, Margaret, he knew, was perfectly aware. Nevertheless, as he was driving to the station with his smart luggage, en route for Yelverton, Cuthbert was obliged to stop his cab at Lady Hilliard's door.

"I have been summoned unexpectedly into the country," he said with assumed carelessness to the servant who answered his ring; "and I wish to leave my address with Lady Hilliard in case she should have occasion to write to me. I shall be back by next Tuesday."

The servant took the card with "Yelverton Castle, Midshire," scribbled upon it.

"Her ladyship is not in town, sir," he said as he saw Cuthbert hesitate; "she went into the country this morning with Miss Bartropp. My lady said she might be away for a week, or longer; but I'll send on your card, sir, at once, and I will give her ladyship your message."

Cuthbert re-entered his hansom with a frown and a heart that beat a little faster.

Gone away! He hated her to make any move for which he was not prepared. He hated to remember she was still so absolutely outside his life and his jurisdiction; it brought him up sharply, as it were, to realize how very little

he was to her yet. It made the future seem doubly impossible and despairing for a moment; but all this vanished as he drove along.

"I am a fool!" he said to himself impatiently. "I expect too much, and expect it too quickly. I must have patience. I shall sketch out a plan of action while I am away, and when I get back I will carry it into effect. She is very young, and although she likes me—of that I am sure—yet she has no knowledge of other things. I doubt if she has even realized she possesses a heart. It shall be my task," Cuthbert said to himself, with a light coming into his cold eyes for an instant, "it shall be my task to awaken you to that knowledge, Margaret."

Secure in the hope that came so strong upon him, how little Cuthbert Denison imagined in this moment that the heart of Margaret Hilliard had not only been touched and revealed to her, but that all unconsciously it had been given, and given for aye to the man whom he hated so unjustly yet so mercilessly.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE emotions that crowded Cuthbert Denison's breast as he at last set foot within the time worn and honoured precincts of Yelverton Castle, could not be fully divided or described. Envy and yet a deliberate sensation of pride, jealousy, curiosity, pleasure, anger, excitement and sullen resentment, all and each had a share in his feeling.

Jocelyn had driven to the station to meet his cousin. Jocelyn, handsomer than ever, his beautiful grey eyes laughing and flashing with delight, his fresh, frank face full of life and eagerness. As he sat holding the reins of the restless horses, he had the air of some courtly prince, a true scion as he was of the purest patrician blood. Cuthbert had responded to his cousin's affectionate greeting in his usual cold manner, made a little colder than usual by the events of the moment. Jocelyn however saw nothing wrong in Cuthbert's manner, he was well used to it by now, and he imagined in his rich sympathy that his cousin was passing through an experience that was as full of pain as of pleasure.

"I am so sorry to hear Aunt Celia is not well," he had said, as he bent down to clasp Cuthbert's hand.

The invitation that had been sent from Yelverton, had included Mrs. Denison as well as her son, but Cuthbert had no intention of bringing about a reconciliation between Sir Noel and the sister who had so disgraced her family.

Truth to tell, Cuthbert, though proud of his mother's birth had neither filial affection nor respect for her; he saw as little of her as possible, and as she was content to lapse into a querulous hypochondriacal invalid, he was content to allow her to do so.

She had never been a clever woman and long contact with trouble and disappointment had to a certain extent vulgarised her nature. Cuthbert therefore never introduced his mother personally into his life, he found her far more valuable by suggestion, and traded a good deal on her delicacy and her love of solitude.

Jocelyn had been once or twice to see his aunt, but his sympathy had been checked when he did so, and as Cuthbert never encouraged his visits they soon ceased. Jocelyn however never forgot to inquire for Mrs. Denison, and he was most attentive in sending her game and flowers and fruit at frequent times.

Cuthbert thanked him now coldly.

"I suppose my uncle is better, since you look so cheerful, Jocelyn," he said.

Jocelyn coloured faintly and busied himself with arranging his reins differently—the boys gave him plenty to do.

"Oh! yes, thank Heaven, the attack seems to be passing away completely," he answered, and he felt a little ashamed of his duplicity for he knew that it was not only his father's recovery that had brought the sunshine so suddenly into his life and into his face. It had been the advent of a certain small black-edged note that had reached him that morning, and that had

been placed close to his heart ever since, that had done this.

Jocelyn was repeating the words of that little note to himself all the while he was driving Cuthbert back to Yelverton.

It was so short, and yet it was so very, very sweet and dear. It had come as such a surprise, too, he had scarcely begun to realize yet the full splendour of the news it contained. Cuthbert turning his cold eyes from side to side taking in each beauty of the park which eventually would belong to the man sitting beside him, was far indeed from imagining the cause of Jocelyn's radiant manner to-day.

"What a simpleton he is, to be sure," was Cuthbert's thoughts, misreading Jocelyn's excitement to mean delight at his arrival.

Any other man, indeed, must have been touched by Jocelyn's affectionate warmth. Not so Cuthbert. He sneered to himself at his cousin's generous feelings. He called him a fool, but the day was to come when Cuthbert Denison was to realize most bitterly, how much he had been mistaken in this, as in other things.

"And your Italian cousin—do you like her, Jocelyn?" he asked, after awhile, as the boys flew over the road, and the grey turrets of Yelverton came into sight from among the magnificent trees.

Jocelyn woke from his thoughts with difficulty.

"Very much—oh, yes, very much," he said, so confusedly, indeed, that Cuthbert gave him a sharp glance.

Was it possible this Italian girl had made a sudden and lasting impression on Jocelyn? He knew the curious tradition about the Grettons—that love came to them once, and once only, and when it came, it came abruptly and when least expected. Cuthbert frowned at this.

He did not want another influence in Jocelyn's life just yet, and, for some reason or other, he had taken a sort of undefined dislike to this Anastasi Vignetti, who had come to live under his uncle's roof.

He knew something about Italian women. He had spent a winter abroad a few years before, and he had come in contact with many strange people and events during that time.

Cuthbert was never one to spare himself in reflection, and he had always reprimanded himself severely for the follies in which he had indulged while in foreign countries—follies which, had his heart been anything other than stone, must have spelt danger to him in some shape or form.

As has before been said, however, Cuthbert Denison, whilst living no more the life of a saint than any other man of the world, had, until fate threw him in the pathway of Margaret Hilliard, never devoted a single pure or noble feeling where any woman had been concerned, and he had known a good many in his time. He regarded them as so many playthings, and dangerous only because of that curious power they possessed, of which he was not only afraid, but jealous.

He was prepared, therefore, to dislike Anastasi, and to doubt her too; and now, when he saw how confused Jocelyn was when he spoke her name, he began to feel in real earnest that he had been right in his judgment of women in general, and of this one woman in particular.

Jocelyn, quite ignorant of his cousin's sharp look and sharper thought, rushed eagerly into conversation, and in a few moments more the phaeton had pulled up at the big, grey stone entrance.

Cuthbert was at Yelverton Castle at last.

The meeting between Sir Noel and his nephew was courteous, though cold. The older man received the younger with every possible dignity, but Cuthbert was only too conscious that his appearance there was in every sense objectionable to his uncle. He bore himself as proudly as he knew how, and outwardly his manner was perfect. Sir Noel, however, with the prescience of age, knew instantly the real truth and worth of the man's nature, and the pride and courtly manner impressed him not at all.

"What does my boy find in him?" was his thought. "This creature is not of kin with

Jocelyn. They are as opposite as the poles. I do not like him—no," Sir Noel said to himself again and again, as the moments passed, and Cuthbert grew more at home in his new surroundings. "No, I do not like him. He is cold, pretentious, insincere. His unhappy mother had at least a heart, though she lacked brains; but this man has no heart, and he will never be a gentleman. I am sorry he has come. Yes, I am sorry I gave way and admitted him to my home and to my friendship."

Jocelyn fortunately gathered nothing of what was passing in his father's mind. He did the honours of the house in his own inimitable fashion, and tried, to the best of his ability, to make Cuthbert feel absolutely at home.

"He must see your ward, and a beautiful ward she is, too, is she not, father! By the way, where is Tasi?"

"I sent her to sit in the gardens. She has been so much in my room since her arrival I thought she looked pale—and the day is so lovely."

Jocelyn laid his hand tenderly on Sir Noel's shoulder.

"I warn you I am beginning to get jealous of Tasi already, dad," he said laughingly.

Sir Noel answered by putting up his thin, white hand, and laying it on his son's.

The action was so full of the tenderest love that Cuthbert's jealous heart contracted with bitterest envy as he saw it. And this love, the pride and affection of a man like Sir Noel Gretton, was given also to Jocelyn, in addition to all else he possessed.

Was it a wonder that one who was denied everything of this kind should nourish an envy, a hate, for one who had so much!

"Let us go and find Tasi. I know where she will be, Cuthbert. Come along, a stroll will do you good after your journey from town. We will be back directly, dad."

Sir Noel watched the two young men as they walked across the lawn. There was a tinge of tears over his eyes as he followed Jocelyn's well-built, graceful figure. His love had grown deeper and stronger for his boy during the past few days.

Ever since the arrival of Anastasi Vignetti to live under his roof, Jocelyn's generous welcome to this girl, his hearty acquiescence in his father's wish, his bright, happy avoidance of all that might have been difficult and disagreeable, revealed his character in new beauties to Sir Noel's eyes. The old man was so proud of this son of his he felt he could never be grateful enough to Heaven for having given him such a child.

"If she could have only lived to this day," he said to himself, as he sat watching the two figures disappear; "if she could have shared in this joy—have tasted this pride!"

It was of his dead wife he thought, always of his wife, who had lived with him so short a time, and who, though dead in one sense, would never be dead to him. Sir Noel's thoughts then passed on again to Cuthbert Denison.

"Why do I dislike him?" the old man mused. "It is not prejudice; I have cleansed my heart of all that. For Jocelyn's sake I determined I would do so, and yet—and yet at the first sight of him my whole heart rises against him. What is it, I wonder? and why should this cruel thought come—this thought that Cuthbert Denison is not true—that he is no friend to my boy, and that if he can work harm in Jocelyn's life he will not hesitate to do it?"

The questions that came were not easy to answer. Sir Noel sank back in his chair with a sigh, and, resting his head on his hand, lapsed again into thoughts that were tinged with a sadness and a trouble he could not shake off or definitely qualify.

By and by Anastasi came quietly into the room. She wore the same long, straight, black gown, but to-day her sombre attire was broken by a jewel worn suspended round her throat on a slender chain. It was a curious ornament; a maltese cross formed of rubies and diamonds, with a square centre of black enamel, which, on being lifted, revealed a space for a small portrait.

Jocelyn had given it to his cousin.

"It belonged to my grandmother, and it has

knocked about in my dressing-case for years; will you have it, Tasi? It will suit you so well, you are not an ordinary young woman. You know you are like a beautiful old picture, and you can wear this sort of thing. Please do take it."

Tasi smiled involuntarily at the boyish eagerness on the handsome face. What woman could refuse to smile at Jocelyn when he looked as he looked then. She took the jewel in her little hands.

"It is most lovely," she had said, and her voice had been low and not very steady. "I have never seen anything more beautiful, but I must not take it, cousin Jocelyn. Some day you—you will have a wife, and then—"

Jocelyn had coloured for an instant.

"But I have no wife now," he cried, gaily, and then, without more ado, he had slung the chain about Anastasi's cream-white throat and fastened the clasp with a click.

"And now it is yours, and you can wear the picture of your pet young man always on your heart, Tasi; only please don't let me know who this young man is, for I warn you I am an absolute monster of jealousy, and I can't answer for what I might not do to you or to him!"

"To save any horrible possibilities, suppose that you give me your portrait, that I can wear it on my heart always!" Anastasi had made answer, laughingly; but had Jocelyn been another kind of man he would have noted with deep significance that the light in her glorious eyes was full of subtle fire and expression, and that a strong touch of eagerness ran beneath her laughing tone.

Jocelyn, being a very baby in all this sort of thing, noticed nothing, and he promised to find her a photograph, or better still, to have one taken especially for her; and then he forgot all about the incident, except to feel keen pleasure whenever he saw the cross gleaming on Tasi's black gown.

Sir Noel had noticed the gift, but he had said nothing. Whatever thoughts came into his heart over it, he kept them there to himself.

He was a wise man, but like many a wise man before him, he was imbued with one superstition. He believed firmly, absolutely in the tradition attached to his family. Love, when it was fated to come to his boy, would come as it had come to him, suddenly, but thoroughly, and no amount of leading up to a point would influence this fate.

Jocelyn, if it was so destined, would love Anastasi with a love that was perfect in its purity and devotion; but if this was not fated to be, then no amount of wishing it would assure it.

The old man looked round with pleasure as the sound of the girl's soft footsteps came to his ear.

"Jocelyn has gone into the gardens to look for you," he said, as he stretched out his hand.

"Is he alone; has Mr. Denison arrived?" Anastasi asked, hurriedly, a tinge of colour came and went in her cheeks. She stood for a moment behind his chair till this colour had gone.

"Mr. Denison has gone with him to assist him in finding you," Sir Noel said with a faint smile. He had no intention of letting anyone gather what had come into his thoughts for Cuthbert.

"I am sorry they have taken so much trouble for nothing," the girl said, as she sat down in a low chair; "shall I read to you, uncle?" she asked, gently.

"No, talk to me; your voice recalls the past so vividly, save that your English is more fluent, more pure. It is strange to me that your father's child should speak our language so perfectly. Paolo Vignetti must have changed indeed since I knew him. In the old times he hated even the very word 'England,' and all that belonged to the English was detestable in his sight!"

Anastasi bent her head over the book she held. Her face had grown very white.

She dared not speak. What was there she could say? How was it possible she could ever speak the truth—the truth that by some powerful influence was growing strangely hideous in her own eyes. How could she say I am an impostor, I am no child of Paolo Vignetti. I have

no right to your shelter, to your goodness? How could she begin now to explain the falseness of her position? How tell this worn and fading old man that her presence in his house was brought about by her desire for revenge—revenge upon the son he adored, upon the man she was growing to love with all the intensity, the passion of her southern nationality?

Already, in these early days, Anastasi's spirit had begun to grow weak, her purpose was commencing to falter.

What had seemed so potent, so imperative to her before she had started out on this great undertaking had begun to fade and grow fainter in its form and lines—her very nature was changing, the tigerish passion of her revenge, the fierceness of her desire to bring ruin on the man who had ruined the one creature in the world who had been good to her, had slackened gradually, and was now melting slowly and surely beneath the magnetic power of the love that was fast filling her whole being.

Already doubt as to Jocelyn being one and the same with the man she had marked out for vengeance and retribution had become a certainty.

There was an atmosphere about Jocelyn that breathed of nothing but freshness and goodness, of straightforward dealing, of honesty and honour of purpose; it was incredible to the girl who had studied him so closely in the short time they had been together to ally any evil thought with Jocelyn Gretton; this man was no cruel wrong-doer, no wanton betrayer of trust, he was truth itself, true to the very core of his being.

The thoughts that thronged Anastasi's breast as she sat quietly by Sir Noel's side were heavy, tumultuous, and very sad ones; a leaching had come upon her from the deception she was practising, she had a yearning to tear away the veil in which she was enveloped and to stand forth before this kind old man and his son revealed as the creature she really was, she longed to be able to stretch out her hands to this new found cousin of hers, and to cry aloud,—

"I am not fit to receive your love and your kindness. I am not the girl you think I am. It is true I am a Vignetti—that the name I bear is my very own; but I am not the child of Paolo Vignetti—I am but a distant kinswoman of his. I came here not to ask home and charity, but to seek vengeance. I came here not to win your love but to work your ruin, Jocelyn Gretton. Yes, to punish you for the wrong you did to the one being on earth I have ever loved till now—the poor dead little real cousin of yours who went to her grave broken-hearted by the shameful cruelty worked to her by an Englishman who bore your name: for this I came here—only for this. When my beloved friend, my more than sister, my dear little Tasi, lay dying in my arms, I wrung her secret from her fading lips, and by her deathbed I swore to avenge her wrong before I went myself to my last sleep. Turn from me if you will!" She could have cried aloud in the anguish of her thoughts as she sat there gazing out on the placid beauties of the summer landscape.

"Turn from me but do not condemn me utterly—think of that broken-hearted child, dead through a cruelty that was so wanton; think what she was to me, how she made her father give me a place in her home when I was homeless, and how she clung to me when I had no one in the world; how she planned a life for us together after her father's death. Think of all this, and then blame me if you can for the hot passion of revenge that flooded my whole being; of the determined desire to seek out this Jocelyn Gretton who had destroyed her fair young life and separated her from me for ever by the horrible silence and stillness of the grave!"

This was the burden of Anastasi's thoughts as she sat there, the sunlight gleaming upon the jewelled cross that hung from her neck, her eyes fixed on the gardens beyond, where the figures of two men were seen coming slowly back to the house.

"It is no use, I cannot say this," the girl said to herself with a weariness full of despair; "yet neither can I let myself remain on here filling a place I have no right to. I am not the Anastasi



ANASTASI'S THOUGHTS WERE FAR AWAY AS SHE SAT IN THE SUNLIGHT, GAZING VACANTLY INTO THE GARDEN.

Vignetti they imagine, I have no kinship with these people. I—I have made some great mistake; Jocelyn Gretton was the name of the man who broke my darling's heart, but that Jocelyn Gretton was never one and the same with this Jocelyn I know so well now; no, no, that is sure to me, of that I am convinced, although the rest is shrouded in such deep mystery!"

Sir Noel roused himself out of his reverie with a little sigh.

"I hear Jocelyn's voice down below; go and meet him, my child; you must be presented to your new guardian, Mr. Denison. I hope you will like him."

Anastasi rose obediently, and went away.

She was coming down the stairs as the young men re-entered the house.

"Ah! there you are, Tasi," cried Jocelyn, and he hurried forward a little to greet her.

Cuthbert stood motionless, his clear, cold eyes were fixed on the girl's form steadily. She was smiling, and there was a tiny touch of colour in her cheeks as she looked down upon Jocelyn.

She was very beautiful. Cuthbert was amazed at her appearance, and then was conscious of a distinctly uncomfortable sensation as she turned the glory of her marvellous eyes full upon him. Jocelyn looked back at him.

"Cuthbert, come and be introduced to your ward; now, Tasi, here is your chance; Cuthbert is no end of a swell at languages, he will be able to chatter away with you in Italian as much as ever you like."

Anastasi did not advance down the stairs, nor stretch out her hand to Mr. Denison.

"We must have many conversations, then," she said quietly, as she bent her small stately head; then, after a minute's pause she turned to Cuthbert abruptly.

"You know Italy well, signor?" she enquired in her own musical language.

Cuthbert answered her promptly in Italian, only too glad to show a certain superiority over his cousin.

"I do not know it at all," he said glibly, uttering

a distinct falsehood, why, he could hardly have said; "I have never been there."

Anastasi smiled most faintly.

"Indeed," she remarked, "then you have a pleasure before you when you visit a country whose language you speak with such ease."

"Now!" Jocelyn cried lightly in his boyish manner—"Now I know you are paying each other compliments, and it sounds *beautiful*; but you must have pity on me, you know I don't want to be left out in the cold, Tasi—"

Anastasi's eyes rested yearningly on his laughing handsome face.

"How bright he looks, and he is happy too; there seems to me some change about him. Yesterday he was almost sad!"

And Cuthbert standing by saw that look in her eyes and knew instantly the truth of her heart.

"She loves him already," he said to himself, sullenly; he did not like this Italian girl very much, he had a feeling she was dangerous; nevertheless he was envious instantly that she should so quickly have succumbed to Jocelyn's power. "She loves him, but does he love her? It seems almost like it, and yet," Cuthbert was in truth a little perplexed, but in a few hours' time his perplexity was to cease altogether, and his mind be enlightened only too well. He was taken upstairs to his room by one of the servants at this juncture, and Anastasi and Jocelyn were left alone.

"You must promise to like Cuthbert very much, Tasi," the young man, said, "he is such a good chap—the best fellow in the world. I give you my word he is."

Anastasi was silent, her slender fingers were playing with the cross on her breast.

"Have you ever been to Italy, cousin Jocelyn?" she asked quietly yet suddenly when she spoke.

Jocelyn laughed and shook his head.

"No, that is something that has yet to happen. I have really been nowhere. Oh! to Paris of course, and once to Monte Carlo, and ever so

many times to Scotland, that is about the extent of my wanderings. Look here, Tasi, come and sit outside, and I will go and order some tea. I am ever so thirsty."

The girl followed him out obediently, and Jocelyn, having put her into a cosy chair, went off to order the tea as he said, his heart singing an absolute psalm of joy as he went because of that little letter cherished in an inner pocket, that letter that told him the girl he knew now he loved better than his life, was come quite close to him, was in fact, barely two miles away at that moment, and had asked him to go and see her as soon as he could spare time, to make such a visit.—Spare time!

Jocelyn was only in a fever for the hours to pass, for the night and the morning to have sped away and the afternoon of to-morrow come at last. He scarcely knew how he walked or talked—he was intoxicated with his joy, bewildered by his great happiness.

Anastasi sat perfectly motionless as she was alone.

"One of these two men have lied to me," she said, slowly to herself, "which of the two is the traitor?"

But she knew even while she thought it, that the lie had not been spoken by Jocelyn.

(To be continued.)

Wood for tennis rackets requires at least five years' seasoning; that is to say, it requires to be kept for five years in the rough timber state before being cut up for use. Wood for pianos is kept, as a rule, for forty years before it is considered sufficiently in condition to be used.

The skeleton of Marengo, the Arab horse which Napoleon rode at Waterloo, is now in the Museum of the Royal United Service Institution, but two of its hoofs are gone. These were made into snuff-boxes, one of which is preserved at Westing Hall Norfolk; the other is kept at the Guard Room St. James's Palace, London.



IDA CLASPED HER HANDS NERVOUSLY TOGETHER, ENDEAVOURING TO REALIZE THE CRITICAL TURN OF AFFAIRS.

MY POOR BROTHER-IN-LAW.

CHAPTER XIX.

"TO BE LEFT TILL CALLED FOR."

THE detective stood up, and slipped the notes he had been taking into his pocket. In another moment he would have been out of the room, but just then a servant knocked at the door and handed his mistress a businesslike-looking letter on a silver salver, saying it had just been sent up from the station.

Ida took it and opened it unconcernedly; but when she found that it was a notification from the station-master to say that some luggage labelled "Peter Derrick, Esq.—Left till called for" had been left in the cloak-room for the last fortnight, and he wished to know if it had been forgotten, the blood rushed into her white face, and a scared look came into her eyes, for she saw the one fact standing out distinctly from all the rest—that her husband had never left the place at all, and that his journey had been all a pretence.

She had been clinging to the hope, fragile as it was, that she might have been mistaken, in the darkness, as to her husband's identity; but now that hope was crushed. He must have had some very strong motive for staying at home when he had once made up his mind to go to London; and there was something horrible in the idea that he had been hiding in his own house, in order to spy on his wife's actions, or else on those of his guests, even if there had been nothing worse behind.

If Harris guessed that there was the smallest mystery about Mr. Derrick's absence, that would throw suspicion on him at once. If he knew that his luggage had been waiting all this while at the station, he would guess the rest. What was to be done?

She put her hand to her head, feeling incapable of connected thought. It could not be left

where it was, because that would seem such an unaccountable proceeding to the station-master. It could not be brought back to the house, because that would show that Mr. Derrick's journey had been a fraud, and excite the worst surmises. She could not ask any one's advice, because that would be to betray her dreadful secret. Never before, except when the pillow was stifling her, had she felt so lonely and helpless.

Harris got up some talk with the Major, but all the while, his sharp eyes were watching her, and she knew it. He saw how she flushed and afterwards became as white as death; he saw the frightened look growing on her face as she read and re-read the letter; he knew that she was perplexed beyond measure as to how she ought to act, and he would have given almost anything to know what it was that was puzzling her.

Presently she got up unsteadily, and seated herself at a small writing-table which stood against the wall.

A bright idea had occurred to her: the luggage could be sent to the address in London which her husband had given her, and she wrote to desire the station-master to forward it at once.

If the luggage were lost on the road she would not care a bit; for the loss of a few coats and waistcoats, and other articles of attire, seemed an infinitesimal matter when a human life was hanging in the balance.

She was just going to shut up the envelope when she remembered that she must enclose some money, and, of course, she had not provided herself with a purse when making her exceedingly hurried toilette.

There was nothing to be done but to ask the Major for half-a-sovereign, so she looked over her shoulder and made the request almost in a whisper, hoping that it would not reach Harris's ears.

Unfortunately, when the Major put his hand into his pocket, he drew out a handful of sovereigns and nothing smaller, at which he was

deeply grieved; but Harris saw his opportunity, and stepping forward eagerly, he laid a half-sovereign on the writing-table, saying respectfully,—

"If you will allow me, madam?" Whilst at the same time he put his clumsy foot on the station-master's letter, which had dropped from Ida's lap.

It was in his pocket before she missed it, which did not prevent him from being very assiduous in looking for it.

Naturally, it was not to be found, which created some surprise; but Ida was afraid of showing any anxiety, so she could only give a cursory glance round, and resolve to have a more protracted search when there was nobody to look on.

The detective's eye lighted on a portrait of Mr. Derrick's hanging over the mantel-piece, and he asked in a careless tone if that was a good likeness of Sir Thomas.

"Not very good," Ida said, quietly; but the Major exclaimed without a thought, "But it's a capital one of Mr. Derrick—to the very life. I could fancy he was going to deliver a lecture on Hygiene."

Was it through absence of mind that Mrs. Derrick had not corrected his apparent mistake; or was it because it would have been very convenient at this crisis to pass off her husband's portrait as that of his brother? Harris asked himself, as he made some trivial comment on the painting, whilst Major Godfrey only thought it was highly characteristic of the Professor to have his own portrait in his dressing-room instead of his wife's, which any other man would have considered it a privilege to possess.

As soon as Harris was alone in the garden, he pulled the station-master's letter out of his pocket, and studied it attentively.

It was a very important document in his eyes, for it seemed to confirm his growing suspicions. No man is likely to say he is going away, and, after locking up his things, stay at home, without some very strong motive for his conduct.

Now, it did not require a detective's eye to perceive that Mrs. Derrick was a beautiful woman, married to a man many years older than herself; whilst, under the same roof, there was a very good-looking young man, just at an age when the heart is most susceptible. Granted that the young officer's admiration was of the most involuntary and respectful kind: still the circumstances might easily be sufficient to excite jealousy in a husband's mind, and jealousy is known to work like madness in the brain.

Mr. Derrick had evidently stayed behind with the intention of watching his wife and Captain Congreve during his supposed absence. That was a reasonable theory; discreditable perhaps to the master of the house, but not the less intrinsically probable on that account. But why should a man with plenty of money in his pocket, take to robbing his guests of their favourite bits of jewellery? That was what Mr. Harris called "a stumper."

He had not forgotten Captain Paulett, and did not see why he should be excluded from all share in the business, because of this new theory which had cropped up. Paulett might have egged on Mr. Derrick, stooping to play the part of Iago out of hatred to his brother-officer.

The theft of the diamonds did not probably enter into his plans, but he knew how to turn it to his own purpose by throwing suspicion on Congreve. Possibly the theft was the outcome of Mr. Derrick's madness; but the position of the bangle in Congreve's room was the effect of Paulett's personal spite.

Was he aware that Mr. Derrick's brain was in a dangerous state, and was that the reason why he was prowling about the house when he ought to have been in bed? Harris found these questions rather difficult to answer, so he resolved to occupy himself with present necessities, rather than with past perplexities.

He could easily keep an eye on Captain Paulett, and cause him to be "shadowed" like a suspected dynamitard, till he could take up some evidence against him.

It was a strange thing that two people had been nearly murdered on the same night, whilst several were on the alert, and yet the would-be murderer had escaped without leaving a single clue behind him.

In Mrs. Derrick's case there was the pillow, but that had come from the other side of her own bed; and on the floor, half-hidden by the valance, he had found a coat button, but this was of the most ordinary shape and pattern, such as you might see on ninety-nine coats out of a hundred.

When he discovered Congreve bleeding to death on the secret stairs, there was no weapon of any sort near him, a fact which made it difficult to find out his assailant, but which disposed at once of Paulett's insinuation of suicide. A man could not stab himself without the aid of some instrument; and, in the event of his death, that instrument must necessarily be close at hand. But if he were stabbed by some one else, that some one else would naturally walk off with the knife. In this case the murderer, according to Harris's reflections, had but one way to choose, and that was up the steps into the habitable part of the house, as the policeman had never stirred from his position at the foot of the steps by the door into the garden.

There could have been no struggle, for not a sound had reached his ears; and he was certain that if Captain Congreve had uttered so much as one groan he must have heard it. Now it was very odd, to say the least, that the murderer could have the good luck, as well as the audacity, to emerge into the full gas-light in the gallery, and walk along it till he reached the stairs, without being heard by a single soul, although so many had been disturbed and were then wide awake, with ears sharpened by anxiety.

Thinking over it, he began to suspect that Mrs. Derrick had not only seen him, but helped him to escape. If so, she had done a most reprehensible act, for she had cast a madman loose on an unsuspecting world. But what woman would wait to study consequences, or even the rules of abstract justice, when the object of her marital affections was concerned?

No doubt she had forgiven him that nasty business with the pillow when she saw him slinking along with a frightened face, and the terror of pursuit in his eyes. She would put herself in the background, the gallows in the foreground, and her husband close behind it. Help him? Of course she would, there was not a doubt of it, if she could.

Even Paulett, if he had been mixed up in it to the smallest degree, would have been glad, for his own sake, to assist in getting his confederate out of the way.

The question was narrowing itself to one issue. Find Mr. Derrick, and you would find at the same time, the thief and the murderer who had haunted Derrick Hall. It was not likely he would go to the Great Western Station at Bransfield, where his face and figure were well known, and where he would probably be delayed by questions about his luggage; and if he went to one further down the line, he must either get a horse, or a vehicle and a horse, to take him there.

Now Harris had already ascertained that no horse had been out that night from the Hall stables, except the one which George, the groom, had driven in the dog-cart when he went to the barracks to fetch the doctor. Therefore the means of locomotion must have come from Bransfield, and instant inquiry should be made amongst the cabmen. A personal description of Mr. Derrick must also be sent to every police-station in England and Scotland; but Harris had an instinctive feeling that he would not have gone far off. A madman was, after all, more likely to betray himself than a sane man, and he would not be at all surprised to meet him in the park in the course of the day, walking quietly towards his own house, without the smallest idea that he was suspected of any crime against earth or heaven.

But it would not do to trust either to a hypothesis or an expectation, and in the meantime there was much to settle and arrange; so Harris hurried back, to turn the results of his reflections into efficient actions.

CHAPTER XX.

A PLEASANT SURPRISE.

"He must not die," Ida said, in an agitated whisper, as she stood outside the door of Cecil Congreve's room, and looked up into the doctor's grave face with imploring eyes. "You will save him, won't you?"

Dr. Murray was struck by her manner. It seemed to him that she had some pressing reason for wishing his patient's recovery, beyond the natural one of the friendship between them.

"He shall not die if I can pull him through. It is only a question of strength."

She clasped her hands nervously together, as her lashes drooped on her colourless cheeks. She was thinking of her husband, whilst any looker-on would have concluded that she was fully engrossed with the critical position of her friend.

If Cecil Congreve died, her husband would indeed be a murderer, and stand at a short distance from the gallows, if ever tracked to his hiding-place.

The world seemed a poor sort of place to her at the moment, but her dejection had not reached such a point as to make the gallows appear a pleasant kind of exit.

"Would you be offended if I telegraphed for our own doctor?" she asked, anxiously.

"Not in the least," was the prompt answer. "I am always glad to share the responsibility in a case like this. Congreve's life is very precious to his brother officers."

"Yes, yes, but you don't think of us," she said, almost irritably. "Wouldn't it be horrible to have it said that this man whom everybody liked was killed in our house?"

"It would certainly be anything but pleasant," with a sudden revulsion of feeling against this heartless girl, who could only think of her own sensitive feelings when a friend was dying under her roof; "but, you know, if you have a real

trouble to think of, the talk of the world seems of no consequence at all."

"As if I ever cared about the world," she broke out, impetuously. "It may say anything it likes of me—of me—but, oh! isn't it enough to send me mad?"

She leant against the wall, her lithe figure writhing as if in bodily pain, her chest heaving, a tearless agony in her eyes.

Dr. Murray's conscience smote him. This girl heartless! she was all heart, and nothing else—except nerves, and the nerves were all unstrung to the last degree.

"You've had enough to try you—certainly," he said, in a soothing tone, as he looked at her with grave compassion in his eyes; "and if you don't want to add to all our anxieties by being ill yourself, you will take my advice and lie down, and I'll give you a composing-draught to send you to sleep."

"Sleep? I mustn't sleep! Do you think anything could make me sleep and forget?" she asked as she put her hand across her burning eyes.

Body and brain were alike worn-out—but she felt that she must not give way at any price. She was bound to keep up, with eyes and ears equally on the watch.

There was something very pathetic in this determination, struggling against her overwhelming sense of exhaustion, and the unselfishness of her character stood out clearly in her strong resolve.

"You must forget," the doctor said, firmly. "It is all over—your personal danger, I mean."

"My personal danger!" she repeated with the utmost disdain. "Do you think I care about that? If you told me I had disease of the heart, and that I should drop dead before the end of the day, I should be thankful—so endlessly thankful!"

"You wish for death? Impossible! You have health, friends, fortune, beauty—the gift that women prize," he added, with a smile. "Dear Mrs. Derrick, until the last few weeks, I should have thought you were the happiest of women."

"Yes; just because I had enough to live on, and as many pretty frocks as I wanted! I thought doctors were different to other men, and did not judge entirely by the outside."

Dr. Murray shook his head.

"I did not go by the outside alone. I thought that you had deeper interests than the other women. I am in the habit of hearing in military circles that you found enjoyment in your husband's scientific pursuits, and yet could join in the pleasures of life as heartily as any other girl—a combination which is very rare, but very charming."

"No," with a deep sigh; "you mistook me quite, just as I mistook myself. I began life with the most absurd high-flown aspirations, and I've ended like this!"

"Not ended, only just begun," he said, encouragingly. "Think of the many years before you."

"I daren't," with a shudder. "I believe it is because I have wasted all my opportunities, that Heaven has sent me these fearful shocks to wake me up; and now it is too late."

"Not a bit of it," briskly. "You are fortunate enough to realise that enjoyment is not the end of a life worth living; whilst you still have time, opportunity, and capacity, for carrying out its nobler idea of work. Think of the sick and the poverty-stricken to whom you can be a ministering angel."

"There would be little of the angel in me," she said, bitterly, as she thought what the public would think of her as the murderer's wife. "They would take my money, I suppose, that is always welcome; but they would turn from me in horror and loathing."

"More likely to fall down and worship you, thinking a goddess had come to them in the likeness of woman," he answered, lightly, though inwardly much disturbed by her words.

He could not understand the cause of her excessive bitterness against herself, but he could gauge its danger.

She was the most interesting psychological study that he had ever come across; but his con-

science told him that he had no time to indulge in it now. Surely it would soften her to see that good-looking boy, Congreve, lying in there as helpless as a baby, his face looking as if it were cut out of a block of white marble, all the strength of his muscular manhood reduced to the lowest minimum of weakness!

"Wouldn't you like to see him?" he asked, as the thought struck him.

But even as she cast a longing look at the door, she shook her head resolutely.

"It can't hurt him," he said, misunderstanding her motive. "He is perfectly unconscious of all that is going on, Godfrey is sitting with him, but he doesn't know him from Adam."

"You won't leave him alone, will you?" she said, earnestly. "Never alone, in case something may happen."

"Nothing would happen,"—again misunderstanding her, for he had no thought of a second attempt at murder in his head. "He is likely to go on in his present state of syncope for several hours. I've got to go back to barracks, but I leave Mrs. Purkiss and the Major in charge. If you like, I can send you up a trained nurse."

"No, we don't want any strangers here."

"Just as you like; but you know they are invaluable to a patient."

"I can't help it, no strangers. I will go and telegraph to Dr. Goodenough."

She went a few steps down the passage, then turned back to say anxiously,—

"You will send for me, won't you; if—?"

She did not end the sentence, for her voice failed her, but he caught her meaning at once, and gave the required promise.

She puzzled him immensely as he watched her going slowly down the gallery, with bent head and flagging step.

If the scandal of the mess were a bit true, she would have been certain to install herself as head nurse in Congreve's room, and no one need have said a word against it, as it was a very natural position for the mistress of the house to take up with regard to a wounded guest.

But instead of doing this, she had flown to the other extreme, and refused even to satisfy her own eyes as to his true condition, when permitted to do so by the doctor in charge.

And yet, he could have wagered his seal-ring, that any other woman, or girl, in the house would have eagerly accepted the privilege.

There was Rose Gilbert, who was always hovering outside the door, for the sake of picking up the last news from anyone who came out of the patient's room. Even Clara Melville had shown the deepest interest, and the tears were in her eyes as she told him that the Professor's retriever had howled three times in the night, so she was sure that poor Captain Congreve would never recover.

She would have gone in like a shot, if he had allowed her to do so, and Mrs. Westmoreland was almost offended, because he sheltered himself behind the portly form of Mrs. Purkiss, and declined her services entirely.

It was very odd, and he puzzled over it all the way to the barracks; but perhaps he would have been still more puzzled if he could have seen Ida Derrick, as she was kneeling by the bedside in the Blue room, with clasped hands and up-raised eyes, her whole heart in her earnest prayer,—

"Oh, merciful Heaven—let me die, if he dies!"

Colonel Westmoreland came over in the morning to fetch away his wife. He would have been very ready to place himself at Mrs. Derrick's service, but he was sure that a longer sojourn in Derrick Hall would ruin his wife's nerves.

Mrs. Westmoreland declared that nothing would induce her to desert the poor darling in her trouble; or Cis Congreve whilst he was so ill; but her husband pooh-poohed her sentimentality, and told her, as a sop to her injured feelings, that she could drive over constantly to ask after the invalid as well as her hostess.

So Mrs. Westmoreland departed tearfully, after hugging Ida as if she wished to crush her flat, and leaving a white chrysanthemum stuck in the key-hole of Cecil's door, as a token of her elderly affection.

Clara Melville went with them, for she was in

mortal dread of being robbed or murdered if she stayed for one night longer. But her tender feelings toward the young Hussar, had revived to such an extent that she declared that she would not be able to have a moment's peace unless Rose promised to send a bulletin every day.

Captain Paulett also departed unwillingly; but fragments of the conversation he had had with his hostess, in the midst of the tragic events of the night, still lingered in his mind, and he thought that it was better to go of his own accord, than to wait till he was asked to leave.

The others, whose names have not been mentioned, because they played so small a part in the story, had gone off early in the morning, feeling sure that their absence would be more desired than their presence.

Only Rose stayed behind, at her own urgent request.

She felt that she could not possibly desert Ida in her hour of trouble, or go away until she knew whether Cis Congreve was to live or die.

Ida knew that she would dread the coming night less if Rose slept with her, and this she offered to do with the sincerest pleasure.

They were not to sleep in the large room with the crimson hangings, and the huge four-poster, but in the Blue-room with its pleasant southern aspect, its modern iron bedstead, and its cheerful cretonne curtains.

There was no unpleasant memory associated with this room; but in the former, Ida felt that she could never have closed her eyes for fear of a feeling of suffocation.

Rose, Ida, and Major Godfrey, were just sitting quietly over their five o'clock tea, when there was a loud ring at the front door.

Ida started violently, for the least noise startled her; but she told the others not to disturb themselves, as she had given strict orders that she was "At home" to no one.

Great was her consternation therefore, when she heard steps rapidly crossing the marble hall, in the direction of the library where they were sitting.

As she sat with wide-opened eyes, and her untasted tea in her hand, the door was thrown open, and Whitaker announced, "Mrs. Craven and Mr. Frederick Craven."

"Auntie," she exclaimed, with a cry of joyful surprise, and the next moment she was folded in what was very like a motherly embrace.

"Oh my child!" gasped Mrs. Craven, literally breathless with anxiety, "then you are not hurt, I was so afraid of coming, but I couldn't keep away."

"You are not murdered after all," cried Fred, as he grasped her hands as soon as she was freed from his mother. "When we saw it all in the papers, it did give us a start. I said 'I'm off,' but the mater cried, 'Not without me, if I die on the road,' or else I should have been here hours before. Was it a ghastly dream, or have you had all sorts of tragedies going on?"

Major Godfrey turned to Rose.

"Don't you think we had better slope?" he said, in an undertone.

She nodded, and they both slipped out of the room, having the prudence to take their tea-cups with them.

It was a long story to tell, and it was told with many incoherencies and interruptions. Mrs. Craven—a fair woman with a plump placidity about her which was comforting to jaded eyes, and a high-bred air which was also a comfort to those who were particular as to descent, &c.,—wept over and kissed her niece alternately, whilst Fred's face grew long, and his almost colourless brows drew together in a frown of anger and disgust as he listened.

In the midst of their talk, Dr. Goodenough arrived—a tall man with long whiskers, fairish hair, turning grey, a broad forehead and a huge mouth.

Ida gave him some tea, and then told him at once all that had happened to Captain Congreve.

"In a state of syncope, I suppose?" he asked, as he stretched out his hand for a piece of bread and butter. Ida said,—

"Yes, he knows nobody, and he hasn't spoken once."

Inwardly wondering how he could eat with such an appetite when he had just been told of such a tragedy, forgetting that if a doctor refused all sustenance because he had heard of a painful accident, he would certainly be no good to the sufferer when his aid was required.

"Where's your husband?" he asked, abruptly.

The cream-jug dropped from Ida's hand and scattered its contents over the silver-tray. Fred jumped up, and began scooping it up with a spoon; Mrs. Craven said,—

"Never mind—you've done it very tidily. It has all gone into the tray," and Ida, having had time to recover herself, answered in her low, sweet voice,—

"I don't know where he is. He said he was going to London, but he has never written a line."

"Have you written to him?"

"Yes—to-day," dropping her eyes.

He asked a good many other questions as to the police, and any theory they might have, &c.; but Ida did not think it prudent to tell him, or anyone else, that they thought a madman had been haunting the house, so her answers were very vague and unsatisfactory.

"You only caught me just in time," Dr. Goodenough said as he stood up, wiping his cavernous mouth with an old-fashioned silk handkerchief. "I was off for my holiday when your wire came, and stopped us."

"Then I hope we can induce you to spend some of your holiday here," Ida said, graciously, feeling that it would be an immense comfort to have her old friend in the house. "I know you are a sportsman, and the shooting is so good that you might do worse."

"I might, indeed," with a smile which did not commit him to anything. "And now, may I see the patient?"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE VOICE OF SCANDAL.

CURIOSITY as to the events at Derrick Hall rose to the highest pitch, and if knockers were not made of particularly durable stuff, the one on the front door would certainly have been worn out.

Everybody seemed to think it a duty to come and inquire in person, and many, unable to tear themselves away, lingered to cast a speculative eye at the windows, as if they thought they could find out which was the one behind which the murder had been attempted.

They came walking, driving, riding. They would talk in the hall if they were not invited any further.

Mrs. Fulford, a stout matron with an ordinary type of countenance, and a fearful mantle, followed by two daughters, cut out of the same pattern, but on a smaller scale, asked for Miss Gilbert, and insisted upon coming in.

Rose had been to a dance at their house on her first arrival at Branfield, and met a curious set of partners who amused her exceedingly by their admiration, and the frank way in which they expressed it.

But she had not conceived any admiration for them, or for her hostess, and she had intended to drop the latter as soon as she could do so with caution and care.

Mrs. Fulford was so conscious of her own virtue, that she thought it beneath her dignity to countenance the smallest flaw in anyone else.

She had heard rumours against the private character of Captain Congreve, so she would not demean herself so far as to ask after his health.

Rose had answered all her inquiries after that "dear Mrs. Derrick—sweet creature," and worn every other subject threadbare; so at last, bored by a lengthy pause which yet did not seem to have the happy effect of sending her visitors away, she said,—

"You will be glad to hear that Captain Congreve is a little better, and that the doctor says there is some hope of his ultimate recovery."

"That is a very good thing, I suppose," Miss Gilbert, and Mrs. Fulford stood up with a sour expression on her somewhat phibian countenance

"Not that I have the smallest interest in the unhappy young man. If I belonged to him, in any way, I should be only too glad to know he was safe under a decent monument in some cemetery."

"No, you wouldn't, Mrs. Fulford," cried Rose, indignantly, as the colour flew to her cheeks, "you would even be prouder and fonder of him than all his friends are; of course you would."

"He has a very interesting countenance," put in the eldest daughter, who could not forget that she had fallen in love with his photograph, which had somehow got into several of the shop-windows, after he had distinguished himself by saving a child's life in the High-street.

"Beauty has nothing to do with it," said her mother, with a reproving glance. "If what I hear is true—"

"Would you please tell me what you do hear?" Rose interrupted, angrily.

"I really don't think I can, it is so very distressing," she began, but anyone could have seen that she was longing to impart the intelligence. "If a man gets into a disgraceful scrape, and then is said to be stabbed by a mysterious person who is never seen, of course the natural inference is that he tried to kill himself—and failed. Good-bye," she wound up abruptly, holding out a fat hand enclosed in a tight new glove.

But Rose was not inclined to let her escape so easily. Every generous instinct of the girl's nature was stung to the quick, her colour came and went, her blue eyes flashed, her breath seemed gone; but she knew that she must control herself, and speak reasonably if she wished to do Congreve's cause good instead of harm.

So with a strong effort to steady herself, she faced Mrs. Fulford, who from her pinnacle of self-satisfaction and worldly prosperity, looked down with such cruel, censorious eyes on her neighbours.

"I don't know who has been taking you in, Mrs. Fulford," Rose began, as quietly as she could, "but you have got hold of the wrong end of the story."

"I told you so, Mamma," said Maria promptly.

"Just you be quiet, Maria," her parent rejoined with a frown.

"I am not the sort of person to be taken in, Miss Gilbert. But of course you would stand up for any one of the Red Hussars."

"Indeed I shouldn't if he had dishonoured his regiment," throwing back her head proudly. "But let me tell you that we are all, from the Colonel downwards, very proud of Captain Congreve as our brother-officer, and that I would stake my head that he would never get into a disgraceful scrape."

"All very well," with a sniff of disapproval, "but facts are facts—and if he hadn't done something queer, why should he try to kill himself?"

"But he didn't. Oh, why won't you understand?" leaning on the high-back of a chair, and still restraining her indignation as best she could.

"He saved Mrs. Derrick's life, and then the wretch who so nearly stifled her, must have tried to kill him out of revenge."

"A very romantic story!" with a palpable sneer. "But where is this wretch? Did he vanish into smoke? He sounds very much like a man of straw."

"He has escaped, I'm sorry to say, but not before he was seen both by Captain Congreve and a detective"—in the former case reasoning from induction rather than from information—for she argued thus: if Congreve seized hold of him and only let him go when the detective opened his lantern, he must have seen him.

"Humph! It's a very curious story," rejoined the Christian-hearted matron, who was actually disappointed at being cheated out of the idea that a gallant young officer, against whom she had no grudge, had committed suicide in order to escape from the penalty of his sins.

"But there is more behind it than you like to mention, my dear young lady. However, we won't say anything about it if it hurts your feelings," making a futile effort to pass, which Rose resolutely blocked.

"My feelings have nothing to do with it," she

rejoined with crimson cheeks, "but it is a wicked shame to spread this about a poor young fellow who is too ill to defend himself. I've proved that he isn't a murderer," with a toss of her head; "what else do you accuse him of?"

"My dear Miss Gilbert," in a soothing tone, "I don't accuse him of anything. I can't help hearing what people tell me—"

"What do they say?" severely.

"Well, I really don't know—you shouldn't press me," with a glance at her daughters, as if claiming their support.

"My brother heard that some missing jewels were found in Captain Congreve's room," blurted out Maria, whilst her sister Jane pulled her sleeve, as a hint to keep quiet; "but I felt sure that there was some mistake about it, and I told him he ought not to repeat such things."

"You are quite right. It is an awful shame!" Rose cried with an angry flash in her eyes. "Do you think if he had put the bangle in his room, he would have taken us all in there to find it?"

"And was it there?" they asked in chorus, with wide, eager eyes fixed on the speaker.

"Of course it was," Rose said, as if she were quite proud of the fact, and thought it conclusive, though her auditors seemed to look at it from another point of view. "The man who stole it put it there, and wrote to Captain Paulett to say where it was to be found."

"Not Captain Congreve?" asked Jane, who was considered the stupid one of the family.

"Certainly not, but somebody else who had a spite against him. It is the element of personal spite which astonishes the police, and all of us as well. Who is there who hates Mrs. Derrick and Captain Congreve with such a fearful hatred?" looking up into the three uninteresting faces, with an earnest appeal in her pretty blue eyes. "Who can there be? It looks really as if it was the work of the devil—not content with trying to murder, but damaging his character as well."

"Anyhow, looking at it from every point of view, there's a mystery," said Mrs. Fulford, sentimentally, as she pulled up her sable bon, as if it were a freezing day in January, "and where there is a mystery there is always something queer. If I were you, Miss Gilbert—if I might offer you advice—a young thing with no mother to take care of you—I should clear out of Derrick Hall as soon as I could, in spite of that very interesting young man who makes such havoc amongst the girls' hearts. Good-bye. Come Maria, I am sure we have kept the horses far too long in the rain already."

Rose, in indignant silence, which did as well as any scornful answer, gave them in turn the tips of her fingers; but Maria insisted upon giving her a hearty grasp, and as she did so, said in an excited whisper; "I don't believe one word against him—it's all that Captain Paulett."

(To be continued.)

MERRY MEG RALSTON.

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CHAPTER XLIII.

WHEN the train reached London, Maitland took a cab at once for his home, Meg and his mother's friend accompanying him. They had barely reached the entrance gate, ere they saw, through the dense foliage of trees that surrounded the old mansion, that lights were moving quickly in the east wing of the house that was occupied by his mother.

His sharp ring had scarcely died away when the footman came hurriedly to the door.

"Now that I have seen you safely home with Miss Ralston beneath your mother's roof, I shall have to hurry on," declared his mother's friend.

"I know your mother will forgive me, Stephen, for not stopping a few days, or at least a few hours, when you explain to her that it is a necessity for me to resume my journey. You must see me back to the carriage."

Persuasion was of no avail. Leaving Meg in the vestibule for a few moments, Stephen complied with her request. When he returned a

moment later, he found her in earnest conversation with the servant.

"Oh, Mr. Stephen!" Meg cried, excitedly! "you must go to your mother at once. I hear she is very, very ill, and that all the servants, for some reason, have fled from the house. Even the nurse, for some reason, refused to remain. Oh, Mr. Maitland!" she repeated, eagerly, "let me go to her bedside and nurse her. She is out of her head, and will never know."

Tears rushed to Stephen's eyes.

"You are an angel, Meg!" he cried, kissing her hand, warmly. "It shall be as you wish. Follow me!"

They entered noiselessly. Mrs. Maitland was tossing restlessly to and fro on a bed of pain. The family doctor was bending over her with a look of alarm in his face.

Stephen stole softly to the bedside, Meg following.

All in an instant, before the doctor could spring forward to prevent them, both had suddenly bent down and kissed the sufferer repeatedly.

"Good heaven!" gasped the doctor, throwing out his right arm and thrusting them hastily aside, "the mischief has been done! I did not have an instant's time to warn you. Your mother is alarmingly ill with that dread disease, small-pox! I am forced to say to you that after what has just occurred—your contact with my patient—I shall be obliged to quarantine you both."

A cry broke from Stephen's lips.

He turned pale as death as he looked at Meg. "Do not fear for me, Mr. Maitland," she said, with a brave smile. "I am not afraid."

"For myself I do not care, for I passed through just such a siege when I was a child, and came out of it unscathed. But you, Meg? Oh, it must not be—it shall not be—that you, too, must suffer this dread contagion!"

"It is too late now for useless reflection. It would be better to face the consequences than seek to avoid them. If it is destined that either one of you should succumb to this disease, you could not avoid it, believe me, though you flew to the other end of the world. Take it very calmly, and hope for the best. Forget your danger now that you are face to face with it, and let us do our utmost to relieve my suffering patient."

"He is right," said Meg.

In this Stephen was forced to concur.

"I am an excellent nurse," said Meg, "and I thank Heaven that I have this opportunity to nurse your mother, Steve, back to health and strength."

Tears filled her eyes as she spoke, which he reached over and hastily brushed away.

"Heaven bless you for your kindness!" he murmured.

He could say no more; his heart was too full for utterance.

The touch of those cool, soft hands on Mrs. Maitland's burning brow had a most marvellous effect in soothing her. During the fortnight that followed she would have no one else by her bedside but Meg, she would take medicine from no one else. She called for her incessantly while out of her sight.

"If she recovers, it will all be due to you, Miss Ralston," the doctor said one day. "You are one of the heroines the world seldom hears of."

There came a day when the ravages of the terrible disease had worn themselves out, and Mrs. Maitland opened her eyes to consciousness. Her life had been spared; but, ah! never again in this world would anyone look with anything save horror upon her. Her son dreaded the hour when she should look in the mirror and see the poor scarred face reflected there.

When she realised that she owed her very life to the girl who had watched over her so ceaselessly, and that that girl was Meg Ralston, her emotion was great. She buried her poor face in her hands, and they heard her murmur brokenly,—

"Heaven is surely heaping coals of fire upon my head."

On the very day that she was able to leave her couch for the first time, and to lean on that strong, brave young arm that helped her into the sunny

drawing-room, Meg herself was stricken down. She had fallen a victim to the same disease.

In those days that had dragged their slow flight by, Mrs. Maitland had experienced a great change of heart. She had learned to love Meg a thousand times more than she had ever hated her. And now when this calamity came upon the girl, her grief knew no bounds. There was ever present in her mind the knowledge that she had saved her life at the expense of her own. And last, but by no means least, the thought weighed heavily on her mind of the terrible sin she had committed in trying to separate Meg Ralston from her son.

What if the girl should die, and Stephen should still believe her guilty? Heaven would never forgive her for her sin. There was but one way to atone for it, and that was to make a full confession to Stephen from beginning to end.

It was the hardest task of her life when her son, whom she had sent for, stood before her. When she attempted to utter the words, to lead to the subject uppermost in her mind, her heart grew faint, her lips faltered.

Would he ever forgive her for her duplicity, even though she had done it for his good?

She had heard of sons who had turned against their mothers for just such offences, and had never forgiven them, even to their dying day. Would it be so with Stephen, she wondered.

She dared not look at him as she began her confession. Hiding her face in her hands, she whispered, brokenly,—

"Come and sit beside me, Stephen, I have something to tell you."

He did as she requested, attempting to take her thin, white hands down from her poor disfigured face.

"Promise, beforehand, that you will not hate me."

"I could not hate you, mother," he said, gently.

"No matter what I have done?"

"No matter what you have done," he answered, gravely.

Burying her face still deeper in the folds of her handkerchief, while her form awayed to and fro, she told him all in broken words.

At length she had finished, and a silence like death fell between them. The mother wondered how her son had taken the terrible confession she had made, but she dared not raise her eyes and look at him.

Moments that seemed the length of eternity, drifted by, and still that silence remained unbroken between them.

Mrs. Maitland had heard of strong men swooning with much less cause, and she wondered if this had happened to her handsome son.

She could endure the horrible suspense no longer. Raising her head slowly from the folds of her handkerchief, she cast her eyes fearfully in his direction.

To her intense amazement, she saw him leaning back comfortably in his seat, stroking his moustache nonchalantly, an ironical smile curving the corners of his mouth.

"Stephen!" she gasped, "are you not bitterly angry with me? Speak!"

"I was very angry, I confess, mother, when this was first known to me; but I have had time since to think the matter over calmly. You acted under the pressure of intense excitement, I concluded, and pride, which was always your besetting sin, mother; and that gained the ascendancy over you to the extent that you would rather have seen Meg in a prison cell, though she was innocent, than see her my wife!"

"You knew it before I told you!" she exclaimed, in amazement.

He bowed his head in assent.

"But how did you find out?" she cried, shocked that the secret which she had believed was locked securely in her own heart, and hers only, was known to another.

"That must be my secret, for the time being, mother," he returned, gravely. "Be thankful that no harm came from your nefarious scheme. If Meg had been thrown into a prison cell and persecuted unjustly, I admit that I should never have forgiven you while life lasted. Now, every thought is swallowed up in the fear that her

illness may terminate as yours did, mother. But this I say to you: if she were the most scarred creature on the face of the earth, I should still love her and wish to marry her."

"I should not oppose it, my son," said his mother, in a low voice, strangely calm.

The terrible calamity which Mrs. Maitland had so long dreaded had not happened—her son had not turned against her.

We will pass over the fortnight that followed.

Heaven had been merciful. Despite the fact that she had nursed Mrs. Maitland day and night, she herself had suffered but a slight attack of the dread contagion, and there were tears in both Stephen's and his mother's eyes when the doctor informed them that there would be no trace of the dread disease on the girl's fair face.

Meg Ralston had passed through the fiery furnace unscathed.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE road back to health and strength was but a short one, for Meg had youth to help her in the great struggle.

When she found that Mrs. Maitland had become reconciled to her, and had even consented to her marriage with her idolized son, and was laying plans for it, her joy knew no bounds.

Once she attempted to explain to the mother that she had not intended to cross Stephen's path, but Mrs. Maitland placed her hand gently over her mouth.

"I learned all about it from Stephen," she said. "That little paper has been destroyed. You are to think no more about it, for fate destined it otherwise; but, instead, you must prepare for your wedding, which is to take place, my dear, just as soon as you are able to have the ceremony performed. Steve is anxious to have it consummated at once, but I say 'no.' I want a grand marriage solemnized within these old walls. I know you will make my son happy. This is a sweet thought to me, after all. My illness brought home to my heart many grave thoughts. The past is past, Meg, dear; the future must hold nothing but happiness for us all."

Silently the girl pressed Mrs. Maitland's hands; her joy was so great that she could not reply.

It was the happiest household ever seen that gathered around Meg Ralston when she was able to sit up. All the old servants were so glad to see Meg her bright, merry self once more, and to have their young master and pretty Meg reunited. They talked of their coming wedding as the greatest event that would ever take place there, and they made the greatest preparations for the coming marriage.

Again cards were sent out, and the first person who received one was Evelyn Churchill.

Her amazement and rage knew no bounds. She had never heard from Meg Ralston since the hour she was sent out in that terrible storm. Nor had she ever seen Stephen Maitland since, nor heard from him. Somehow it had run in her mind that he might have met the girl, and she had told him all that had happened; and she decided that, under existing circumstances, she had better remain away from the wedding.

"There is no use in my remaining in this house, with this fussy old man and woman," she said, flinging down the invitation which she had been reading aloud to her maid. "I only came to this lonely place with the hope of winning handsome Stephen Maitland, and I have fooled away my time here all in vain, it seems. We had better get away at once."

Despite the protestations of old Mr. and Mrs. Bennett, Evelyn Churchill and her maid left the house that very day.

The servants of the place were indeed glad to get rid of them; and as they were being driven away in the carriage, the maid, looking back by chance, saw every one of them standing at an upper window, making wild grimaces at them, which Evelyn's maid venomously returned, saying to herself that she should never see them again.

Mrs. Churchill's home was in a suburb of London, and it was not until she got on the train

bound for the metropolis that she gave full vent to her feelings, and railed bitterly against the unkindness of fate in giving a grand man like Stephen Maitland to such a little nobody as that miserable, white-faced Meg Ralston.

"I hope she will never be happy with him!" she added, in a burst of bitterness that perfectly appalled her maid, used as she was to her mistress's virago temper. Little she dreamed how that prophecy was to turn out!

When they reached the city, they drove at once to the house where they were accustomed to stop.

As strange fate would have it, it was the very house beneath whose roof Meg and Maud Harrington had found shelter when they had come to London in search of work.

The landlady was very glad to welcome back Miss Churchill and her maid.

"You came back quite unexpectedly, Miss Churchill," said the landlady. "We can get your room ready, however, without delay. There is a young girl in the little hall bed-room that your maid has always had. Still, as she doesn't pay anything, she can be moved. By the way, I want you to take notice of her when you see her. She's as pretty as a picture, but she's not quite right in her head."

"She was brought here by a young girl who took pity on her, and while the young girl was off securing work, she suddenly became so unmanageable that we thought the best thing to do was to send her to an asylum. But on her way there she made her escape from the vehicle. The driver never missed her until he had reached his destination."

"Search was made for her, and for many weeks we attempted to trace her, but it was all of no avail. Only last night, by the merest chance, we came face to face with her at a flower-stand where they had taken her for her pretty face to make sales for them. I brought her home at once, for there had been a good reward offered to anyone who would find her."

Here another difficulty presented itself.

"The young girl who caused the reward to be offered is now missing—at least I cannot find her."

"Why don't you insert a 'personal' in the paper?" drawled Evelyn.

"That would be a capital idea. Gracious! I wonder that I did not think of it before," said the landlady. "But dear me! I'm not a good hand at composing anything of that kind for the paper."

"I'll write it out for you, if you like," said Evelyn, indolently.

The landlady took her at her word.

"The name of the young girl whom I wish to find is Meg Ralston," she began, but she never got further with the sentence than that.

A great cry broke from Miss Churchill's lips, and her face grew ashen.

"Did I hear you say Meg Ralston?" she asked.

"Yes; that's the name," returned the landlady, wonderingly. "Do you know her?"

"Yes—I don't know. Describe her. It must be one and the same person," she added under her breath.

"I shouldn't be at all surprised," continued the woman, "for she was at the very place you have just come from. She was a slender young girl, of perhaps some eighteen or twenty years, with a face like a flower, framed in by the loveliest golden hair you ever saw, and a pair of blue eyes, just shading into violet, that, once seen, you could never forget. They were like no other eyes! She had a pretty, pathetic way with her, child-like, and yet with a certain dignity that impressed you with the idea that, although she was very poor, she was born a lady."

"It's the same one," cried Evelyn Churchill.

"Tell me the story of this demented girl over again in all its details. I was not paying attention before. I did not half listen to all you said."

The landlady went over the story a second time for Evelyn's benefit.

Miss Churchill meanwhile paced the room excitedly up and down.

"I'll tell you what I think," she cried excitedly, stopping short before her friend: "those two

girls are surely adventuresses of the worst type. You say at first that she called the demented girl her sister, and then afterwards admitted that she was not any relation to her whatever. You see there was something wrong from the start. Now let me tell you an intensely interesting sequel to your story: the girl Meg Ralston has, since the few short weeks that she left your place, captured in the matrimonial noose, one of the wealthiest young men in England. He is rich himself, and will inherit a large fortune from his mother, to say nothing of as much more from his grandparents—a wealthy old couple who lived in the north. In fact, the old gentleman is my guardian, of whom you have heard me speak so often."

"Well, well, what a marvellous story!" declared the landlady; and her opinion of Meg Ralston went up forthwith instead of being lowered, as Evelyn calculated it would be. "Dear me, dear me! what wonderful things do happen in this world!" she ejaculated.

"The idea of an adventuress daring to attempt to capture Stephen Maitland!" the girl cried. "That is the point I want you to see. I have a great plan," continued Evelyn. "I will write to Stephen Maitland at once, that he may save himself from the snare which is being laid for his unwary feet by that cunning creature; or I will go to his mother and tell her all about it. Surely, she will find a way to prevent it."

"Take my advice, Miss Churchill, and don't bother your pretty head about it," advised the landlady. "It would do no good. If the young man is in love with her, he will marry her, no matter what she is. All you could possibly say to him would not move him one particle. It would indeed only have a tendency to make him like her all the more."

Evelyn Churchill had her own opinion on this matter.

"I will make it a point to have a talk with this Maud Harrington at once," she said. "Do send her in to me."

The landlady could not very well refuse the request so eagerly made.

When Maud came into the room, a few minutes later, and Evelyn's eyes fell upon her, she gave a sudden start, mentally ejaculating,—

"Great goodness! where have I seen that girl before? Her face is certainly familiar!"

CHAPTER XLV.

MISS CHURCHILL stared hard at the lovely girl as she advanced towards where she sat.

"Where have I seen that face before?" she asked herself, in wonder. "Come and sit down beside me," she said, with a winning smile, as she made room for her on the divan. "I would like so much to talk with you."

And the girl complied with a haughtiness that rather surprised Evelyn.

"I have heard all of your story," she continued, with a well-simulated burst of pathetic confidence, "and I feel so sorry for you! I sent for you to tell you if there is any way that I can aid you in searching for your sister, believe me I shall be only too happy to do so."

"The young girl you speak of is not my sister," corrected Maud; "but I love her quite as dearly as though she were."

"Not your sister?" repeated Evelyn, pretending surprise at this information.

"No," was the answer; "but I love her quite as much as though she were."

"Tell me about her."

Maud leaned forward, thoughtful for a moment, looking with dreamy eyes into the fire.

"I have very little to tell," she said. "I have not known the young girl as long as people imagine. Her uncle saved me from a wrecked steamboat, and she nursed me back to health and strength. Who I am, or what I was before that accident, I cannot remember; everything seems a blank to me. There are whole days even now when the darkness of death creeps over my mind, and I do not realise what is taking place about me. This sweet young girl has been my faithful friend, even after her uncle died, sharing her

every penny with me. Now she is lost to me for ever. She went away, and I cannot trace her. There is another feeling which sometimes steals over me," murmured Maud, "a thought which is cruel, and which I cannot shake off, that sometimes impresses me strangely, that somehow we have met in some other world, and that she was my enemy."

"What a strange notion!" said Evelyn. "Oh, that thought has grieved me so!" continued Maud, in a low, sad voice. "I cannot shake off the feeling."

"I hear that she left you to go on the stage," said Evelyn.

"Yes; that is quite true," was the reply. "She went with a manager who was stopping at this house."

"Supposing that I should put you on the track of your friend, would you?"

"Do you know where she is?" broke in Maud, excitedly.

"I think I do," was Evelyn's guarded answer. "But what I was going to say is, if I take you to a gentleman who knows her whereabouts, will you tell him, as you have told me, that she went off with a strange man to be an actress?"

"Yes, indeed; why not?" returned Maud, eagerly.

A slow, cruel smile crept around Evelyn's lips.

"We will take the afternoon train," she suggested.

The landlady made no objection to this, and the first act in the great tragedy was begun as the express moved slowly out of the depot, bearing with it Evelyn Churchill and her companion.

On their journey Evelyn talked incessantly of Meg Ralston, plying the girl beside her with every conceivable question concerning her, until at last Maud grew quite restless under the ceaseless cross-examination.

All unconsciously, her manner grew haughty, and Evelyn noticed it.

At a station, some twenty miles this side of Norton, where the Maitlands were stopping for a time, a tall, dark-bearded man got into the train.

The only seat vacant was the one opposite the two girls. This he took, and was soon immersed in the columns of a paper which he had taken from his pocket.

"Are we almost there?" exclaimed Maud, after a lapse of silence which had lasted for at least ten minutes.

The stranger started violently and looked around.

"That voice!" he muttered under his breath, glancing sharply around.

There was but one being in this world with accents like it, and that was Lina Marston, who lay in her watery grave.

Captain Chevalier—for it was he—gave another quick glance at the two girls opposite him, and bent forward in his seat, that he might catch a better view of the one nearest him, whose face was averted.

Again she spoke, and this time the accents were more startlingly familiar than ever.

Chevalier sprang to his feet, walked down to the end of the carriage, then turned and slowly retraced his steps, watching the girl intently the while.

"I could almost swear that I am getting the tremens again, or that my eyes deceive me," he muttered. "If ever I saw Lina Marston in the flesh, that is she!"

He stopped short, and touched her on the shoulder, his eyes almost bulging from their sockets.

"Miss Marston—I—I mean Mrs. Maitland—is this you? In the name of Heaven, speak to me!"

She looked at him, her great dark eyes studying his face with a troubled expression.

"Maitland!" she muttered below her breath. "Where have I heard that name before? And your face too! Where have I seen it? It recalls something out of my past life," she muttered.

With a low cry he bent forward.

"Then it is you, Lina—Mrs. Maitland?"

Evelyn Churchill, whose face had grown from red to white, sprang excitedly to her feet.

"What mystery is this?" she cried. "What do you mean by calling this girl Mrs. Maitland? There is a friend of mine—a Mr. Stephen Maitland—who is soon to be married to a Miss Ralston. You haven't the two mixed, have you, sir?"

Chevalier turned impatiently to her.

"I have seen the announcement of Stephen Maitland's marriage to Meg Ralston," he returned, his face darkening. "But the question is: how dare he attempt to marry another girl while he has a wife living? I do not know who you may be, madame," facing Evelyn, impatiently. "You say that you know Stephen Maitland well, yet you do not appear conversant with his history. He married this young girl sitting beside you, who was then Miss Lina Marston. On their wedding journey the steamer they were in was lost, and she was supposed by all her friends to have perished in the frightful accident."

While he had been speaking, Lina—for it was indeed she—had been watching him intently.

As he proceeded with his story, a great tremor shook her frame.

With a low cry she sprang to her feet.

"Oh, I remember—I remember all now!" shrieked Lina. "I—I was in the train with Stephen, whom I had just married. Then we went on the steamer. We had a quarrel, and he told me that he did not love me, even though he had wedded me, and I—Oh, the words drove me mad! There was a great rumbling of the boilers, a crashing of timbers, and I felt myself suddenly plunged in the water. But my head—it pains so terribly! I scarcely felt the chill of the water. The next I remember I was lying in a cottage with a young girl bending over me. It was Meg Ralston, my enemy. I remember it all now. I wonder that memory did not come back to me when I heard the name Meg Ralston. She did not know that it was I who was Stephen Maitland's wife, or she would have let me die."

The effect of Lina's words was startling upon Evelyn.

It was indeed an amazing story; but truth is often stranger than fiction. Evelyn realized that she had lost Stephen Maitland for ever. Still, it was a great satisfaction to her to know that Meg Ralston could never have him now.

What are you going to do about it?" she asked, eagerly.

"Do!" echoed Lina. "I am going to claim my husband. He is mine, and all the powers on earth can never take him from me!"

"I suppose," said Evelyn, "now, from the way this amazing affair has culminated, you will not want me to go with you to Stephen—Mr. Maitland, I mean."

Lina turned haughtily on her.

"No," she said. "Why should you wish to go with me to my husband? What interest have you in him?"

Evelyn shrank back abashed, though she stammered,—

"I—I should like to see how he takes it."

"I would like to accompany you for the same reason," interposed Captain Chevalier. "He will be angry enough at your coming back to frustrate his marriage with the girl whom he idolizes so madly."

Lina's face grew stormy as she listened. There was an expression in her eyes not good to see, and which Captain Chevalier knew boded no good to the object of her wrath.

At this juncture the express rolled into the station of Norton.

Bidding Evelyn Churchill and Captain Chevalier a hasty good-bye, and insisting that under no circumstances should they accompany her, Lina hailed a cab, and gave the order.

CHAPTER XLVI.

CAPTAIN CHEVALIER stepped suddenly forward and hailed a passing cab, saying to himself that he must be present, at all hazards, at that meeting which was to take place between Lina and Stephen Maitland.

"Keep yonder carriage in sight," he said, point-

ing out the vehicle just ahead of them, and producing, as he spoke, a bank-note, which he thrust into his hand.

The man did his duty well.

Pausing suddenly, and bending low, he whispered to the occupant of his vehicle that the carriage ahead had stopped short.

"All right," said Captain Chevalier, sharply. "Spring out—here is your fee, my good man."

"Am I to return for you, sir?" asked the driver.

"No," answered Captain Chevalier, impatiently.

He drew back into the shadow of the tall pines as his carriage drove away, lest the occupant of the vehicle ahead should discover his presence there. He saw Lina alight and pause involuntarily before the arched entrance gate that led round to the rear of the Maitlands' abode.

Captain Chevalier watched her keenly as she stood there for a moment, quite irresolute. His heart was all in a whirl, as he glanced up at the grand old mansion whose huge chimneys confronted him from over the tops of the trees.

"From the very beginning, Maitland has always had the best of me," he muttered. "I never loved but one being in all my life," he cried, hoarsely, "and that was Lina Marston, and he won her from me. From that moment on I have cursed him with all the passionate hatred of my nature. Since that time life has held but one aim for me—and that was, to crush him—and that opportunity will soon be mine—that hour is now at hand. He will shortly be wedded to another, if Lina does not interfere, and then—ah!—and then—"

His soliloquy was suddenly cut short, for the sound of approaching footsteps was heard on the snow.

He would have drawn back into the shadow of the interlacing pines, but that he saw he was observed by a clergyman who stepped eagerly forward.

"You are a stranger in our midst," he said, holding out his hand to him; "I do not recollect having seen your face before. I—I have a favour to ask of you. Would you mind lending me your assistance as far as the house yonder—which you can see over the trees? I—I am not very well—have just recovered from a spell of sickness. I—I wish to visit the inmates of the house to perfect some arrangements concerning a happy event that is to take place on the morrow. I find myself overtaken by a sudden faintness. I repeat, would you object to giving me your arm as far as the entrance gate yonder?"

Captain Chevalier complied, with a profound bow.

"I shall be only too happy to render you any assistance in my power," he murmured. "I used to know the family a few years ago," he went on. "I am not so well acquainted, however, with the present heir. Pardon me, but may I ask if the event to which you allude, that is to take place to-morrow, is a marriage ceremony?"

The clergyman bowed gravely.

"Between young Mr. Maitland and a Miss Ralston?"

Again the reverend gentleman inclined his head in the affirmative, remarking that the bride to be was as sweet and gracious as she was beautiful.

Captain Chevalier looked narrowly at his companion for an instant, then he asked, quickly,—

"Again I ask pardon for the questions I wish to put to you, but you are not the same clergyman who was sent for to perform the marriage ceremony at Cornwall? and, again, the same who, later on, united Mr. Maitland in marriage to the beautiful Lina Marston?"

The reverend gentleman bowed, wondering vaguely why the stranger should catechise him after this fashion, and if idle curiosity alone had prompted these remarks.

(To be continued.)

A CAME with a concealed "clip" at the end is the latest implement of a thief's outfit. The clip is operated by a spring in the handle, and the tool is used by shop-lifters to clutch things apparently beyond their reach.

NITA'S GOOD FORTUNE.

—107—

"EH!" cried Mr. Dunbar, knitting his heavy white brows and staring hard at the girl who had attracted his attention. "Who are you?"

She was sitting at the long table of the Dunbar Watch Factory, one among fifty.

The other girls, who were sufficiently near to hear the question of the proprietor of the great establishment, looked curiously at the employee who had attracted the notice of the whimsical old millionaire, Robert Dunbar.

Nita Fane, quite as surprised as were her associates, stood up, colouring deeply. She mentioned her name. He continued to regard her fixedly.

"Where do you live?" he asked.

"At 98, Green-street," she replied.

"With whom?"

"With my aunt, Mrs. Mason."

She was embarrassed by his steady scrutiny. Her eyes dropped.

She was a very pretty girl, as well as a modest one. Her features were well cut. Her copper-coloured hair had little waves and ripples in it. Her eyes were large, grey and black-lashed. There was a dainty refinement about her which affected one like the perfume of a wild-flower.

"You shall have work in the office," decreed Mr. Dunbar. "You may begin to-morrow."

"But," stammered Nita, "I do not understand figures, typewriting, nor any form of office work."

"You will learn, I doubt not. The pay shall be from the first four times what you are receiving here." Then, by way of explanation of such astonishing favouritism, "You look very like a sister of mine who died long ago."

He passed on.

The manager of the room looked at Nita. So did all the girls. They were thunderstruck, and envious. Well as they all were acquainted with the idiosyncrasies of Mr. Dunbar, his erratic fancies and spasmodic generosity, they were unprepared for the sudden partiality he had shown to Nita Fane. They could not understand it, but then neither could she.

The following morning she reported for work in the office. Her superior had evidently received orders to be painstaking and patient with her, for the duties which would be required of her were all very lucidly and elaborately explained.

When on Saturday night she received the full pay for a week in the office, she felt in her heart that she had not earned it, and still it was more than welcome to the two who lived in the little drab cottage at Green-street.

A week later even greater favour was shown her. She was allowed to go out every afternoon, to be initiated in the mysteries of stenography.

For this tuition her employer had paid in advance. Despite his kindness, he seemed to take small personal interest in her, for he seldom saw her, still more seldom spoke to her, and never in any way presumed upon her advancement, for which he was responsible.

She was a clever girl. She was indefatigable in making the most of her opportunities. She gained the confidence as well as the admiration of the manager.

One day, when she had been given a fairly responsible position in the factory, Mr. Dunbar sent for her.

"Sit down," he said. "I hear you are getting on well. I suppose, though, that you will be running off to get married when we need you most. Eh?"

Nita turned scarlet, but did not answer.

"Out with it," he ordered. "You are engaged?"

At first the girl was inclined to be indignant, but a second later she reflected that he had been so kind and helpful he really had a right to ask her such a question.

"Yes," she answered, "I am engaged. But I am not to be married for three years yet. Dick—his name is Richard Leyburn—went out to Canada several months ago. We were too young and too poor to marry. But we shall both work

hard, and when he is able to buy a little home out there he will come back for me."

"Humph!" muttered the old man. "I see I did not make a mistake when I determined to give you a chance. You are wiser than nine girls out of ten. That is all."

But that was not all, for, after that, opportunities were put in her way which many who had grown grey in the service of Robert Dunbar would have been glad to encounter.

"Nita, you're a very lucky girl!" said her particular friend, Mary Thompson. "I only wish I had half your chance. We need money so much. There are the three younger girls to educate. And Tommy—poor little lad—might get over that diseased hip if he only had proper treatment. If it were not for the mere accident of your resemblance to a relative of Mr. Dunbar's, he might have chosen me to shower his favours upon that day he went through the factory. Not that I grudge you your fortune, dear. You deserve it all—and more, too. Perhaps Mr. Dunbar will make you his heiress, Nita."

Nita laughed merrily.

"Perhaps," she rejoined, "the sky may fall, and then we shall catch larks. No, indeed! That is outside the possibilities. You forget he has three children of his own."

"Well, anyhow, you can't complain."

"I am more than satisfied. Aunt Julia and I no longer lie awake at night wondering how the rent is to be paid, and we put on extra shovelful of coal without particular pricks of conscience."

Just two years after the day when the proprietor of the Dunbar Watch Factory turned the sunshine of his countenance upon her, Nita wrote a letter to her lover.

"Of course you know all about the singular fancy Mr. Dunbar has taken to me, and the numerous ways in which he has befriended me. Now, he declares that I am to go to Paris with Madam Maurice next month. She has charge of the designing room, here. I am to learn, while in Paris all I can about the latest designs, decorations, &c., for watches, and when Madam Maurice resigns, as she is to do soon, I am to get her place. Think of that, Dick!"

"She's a sweet little soul, and a plucky one, that sweetheart of mine," young Leyburn said, when he read the letter. "But she shan't work for the Dunbar Watch Factory, or any other concern, much longer, if I know it."

Nita did go to Paris with Madam Maurice, and almost the very first letter which reached her on the other side reported the death of Robert Dunbar.

The Frenchwoman and her charge were recalled, as important changes were at once to take place under the new management.

To the surprise of everyone the name of Nita Fane was not mentioned in the will of the old millionaire.

Dick Leyburn, who had come back brown, rugged and handsome, only laughed when Mrs. Mason told him that.

"I do not know why he should have done so. For my part, I'm glad he did not. I can give my wife as fine a home and as comfortable a life as any woman need ask."

So one warm, fresh, sunny, delightful April day he and Nita were married. There were a good many people from the factory present, and Mary Thompson was bridesmaid.

And as sweet a bride as the sun ever shone on was Nita, in her soft white gown of China silk, with a cluster of white lilies in her hands.

And when little Mrs. Leyburn was standing in her aunt's parlour, and receiving the congratulations of her friends, the old lawyer who had been Mr. Dunbar's particular crony approached her with a bow.

"I was instructed to give you this on your wedding day," he said, holding out a long envelope.

Wondering, she took it, opened it. This was the letter she read:—

"My Dear Child,—

"Your mother was my sister. When you were a mere baby she sold a certain property, and gave me the money received for it to hold in trust for you. Soon after I ran away from home

I changed my name. I invested the thousand pounds. I have been successful. When I endeavoured to find my sister, years afterward, I could procure no trace nor tidings of her. Struck by your similarity to her, I spoke to you, and discovered that you were my niece. But I knew I would be doing you a greater kindness by giving you a good business education—letting you earn your living, and permitting your lover to marry you as a poor girl, than handing you the money would have been.

"Herewith I give you the original thousand in bonds, and two thousand pounds more. I am happy to be able to make restitution, even at this late day, but I cannot blot from my heart or memory the fact that it was through my crime of theft—I can use no milder word—that my poor sister, in a strange country, died of want, as you since have told me. Believe me, for all my prosperity, my sin indeed has found me out.

"Your uncle,

"ROBERT DUNBAR."

Nita looked at her husband, the tears shining in her eyes.

"So this explains it all. Now I can help to make others happy. Little Charlie Thompson shall be treated for that trouble with his hip, and I'll see that the younger girls are given a chance to go to school instead of having to run cash all day in that crowded store. And Aunt Julia shall buy this house outright, and—oh, there are so many good things I can do! You used to say there was no romance in the world nowadays. What do you say now, Dick?"

"I would say," he whispered, smiling fondly down upon her, "that a very large slice of romance has fallen to your share—and the sweetest wife in the world to mine."

A NOVEL CHARWOMAN.

—o:—

"THERE, Harriet, don't you think I've caught the spirit of that thicket of blossoming sweet-brier?"

"It's just beautiful, Miss Zaidée!"

Straight and slim as a tall river-reed, Zaidée Thorpe stood before her easel, while Harriet, the hard-featured hand-maid, peered over her shoulder at the picture supported on its pegs.

One face was yellow and quitted over with fine wrinkles; the other fresh and delicately tinted like a rose-leaf. Thus life places its contrasts, side by side.

"I think," said Zaidée, "I shall call it 'The Spirit of the Spring Wind.'"

"And a pretty name, too, Miss Zaidée."

"Do you think it will sell, Harriet?"

"Certainly, Miss Zaidée. Why shouldn't it?"

"Have you got the others packed carefully, Harriet?"

"Yes, Miss Zaidée."

"Sure, Harriet?"

"Certain sure, Miss Zaidée."

"And you remember the prices?"

The maid nodded, and tied her puce-coloured bonnet-strings, took up the neatly papered parcel containing the artistic treasures, and started off on a brisk trot to catch the nine-o'clock train.

Zaidée stood at the door, the bronze-brown rings of hair blowing all over her forehead in the breezy April atmosphere, the sparkles coming into her soft hazel eyes, while one hand held down her brown linen painting-apron.

"There's the whistle," said Zaidée aloud.

"She's caught the train. And now I must go downstairs and boil the beef-bones into soup, and make a dried-apple turnover pie for dinner, if I expect to have any. No, I don't want any dinner. I'll content myself with bread and butter and a glass of milk, and keep the soup and the turnover for late supper, when Harriet comes home. And seeing that the coast is clear, I'll just give the studio a thorough cleaning. It's too dainty a job even for old Harriet, with all those canvases and colour-tubes lying around, and she will never let me attempt it if she is at home. Oh, dear, I do hope those plaques will

some of them sell! I wish I knew of some way to earn something. I feel so ashamed to take Harriet's hard-earned money to buy my ribbons and hairpins and things. Sometimes I think that art is all a mistake, and that I'd better take to governing or needlework, or—or go out as a shop-girl. Even the old woman driving down the hill on that load of tin-ware earns something. Her wares are at least saleable. Oh, how I wish mine were! There she comes now. She's waving her hand; she's beckoning. I told her yesterday we didn't want any tins. What on earth can she want?"

Zaidée ran out to the garden gate, with her brown linen apron over her head.

"What do you want?" she called out, in a voice that was sweet and clear as a small silver clavier.

"Is Harriet Morris there? Tell Harriet that Miss Fernley, up at the Manor, wants her to come and clean the book-room out. It's a nice job, and the woman that does it most times is sick of rheumatism, and Miss Fernley thinks Harriet Morris could do it nicely. Right off, please—they're in an awful hurry! It's got to be done afore the master gets back, 'cause he don't like no women folks in his room."

"Yes, but—"

Jingle-jangle went the pots and kettles, the saucepans and the pie-platters, and old Jane Brown chirruped her horse down the hill.

Zaidée looked gravely after her.

"How provoking for Harriet to lose such a nice bit of work as that!" said she, aloud. "It can't be hard to do, and the Manor people will be almost sure to pay well. I—believe—I—will—do—it—myself!"

Zaidée Thorpe was one of those impulsive creatures who do things three times before they think once, instead of thinking three times before they do it once. And it was scarcely five minutes before she came flying downstairs in a grey gown, a worsted hood tied under her chin, and boots thick enough for a ploughboy.

"I shall make a good enough Harriet Morris for anybody," she said. "I'm quite sure the Fernleys never have seen her."

"But, my dear, I'm afraid you are not strong enough," said Miss Fernley, blankly surveying Zaidée through the moony orbs of her eyeglasses. "I supposed, from what Mrs. Brown told me, you were stout and elderly."

"Oh, I'm very strong," said Zaidée. "And I'm a good worker. Only try me."

"And this is a very particular job. My nephew, Roger—"

"I know all about books," said the young impostor. "Only give me a silk duster and a very soft feather brush, and some hot water and white soap for the shelves. Oh, I'm sure I can give satisfaction."

Miss Fernley could but yield. Most persons yielded when they came in contact with Zaidée's impetuous will, and presently she was on a high step-ladder, deftly manipulating the half-calf and russet-bound treasures.

"Oh, be careful—do be careful!" faltered Miss Fernley, wringing her thin white hands. "That is the old Antwerp edition. Let Jones take it. It's too heavy for you."

"Jones," a sour-faced lady's-maid in a frilled white cap and ruffled apron, promptly advanced; but Zaidée flashed a triumphant glance at her.

"No one shall touch the books but myself," said she. "There! do you see?"

"My misas didn't expect any young person was to do the job all by themselves," enunciated Jones. "I'm to assist, please."

"No, you're not," said Zaidée, in the softest and most gracious of voices. "I am responsible for these books to-day. Do please go away and give me a chance."

"I really think she can manage, Jones," whispered Miss Fernley.

"Ma'am, she ain't 'arf strong enough," said Jones, severely. "W'y jist look at the build of her! Bless and save us!" with a start, "there comes Mr. Roger himself, and the library all hupside down, as you may say!"

Miss Fernley uttered a faint shriek, and dropped her eyeglasses.

Jones fled at the entrance of a tall gentleman with a travelling valise in his hand.

"I forgot my most important manuscript," said Mr. Roger Fernley. "Hallo! what's this! What does all this confusion mean in my library, eh, Aunt Rachel?"

"We thought, Roger," stammered Miss Fernley, trying to appear at ease, "that a little cleaning—"

"Hang cleaning!" said Mr. Fernley, with undisguised dissatisfaction. "You ladies are simply monomaniacs on the subject of cleaning. My good woman," advancing resolutely toward the step-ladder, "be so good as to come down from there. What's her name, Aunt Rachel? Harriet Morris, do you say? Well then, come down, Harriet Morris! Do you hear me?"

Softly Miss Thorpe whisked the silk duster around a sumptuous edition of "House of the Seven Gables," and replaced it tenderly on the shelf. Then she leisurely turned her head.

"Yes, I hear you," said she. "But I don't intend to come down. I've been engaged to clean this bookcase, and I intend to finish the job. And the sooner you go away and leave me, the sooner I shall be through. Will some one please hand me a soft brush—hair would be preferable?"

"I don't think you quite understand that your services are no longer required, Miss Thorpe," said Roger, in ominous accents.

"Do come down, Harriet," pleaded Miss Fernley. "Nobody ever dares contradict my nephew."

Zaidée quietly dusted on, lightly clapped the sides of the open book together, and replaced it on the shelf she had daintily brushed.

Fernley watched her with a curious shrug of his shoulders.

"Upon my word," said he, "she's a cool hand."

And he grasped the standard of the tall step-ladder, on whose highest step Miss Thorpe was seated.

"Don't shake that ladder, Roger," shrieked Miss Fernley. "She'll fall!"

"Well, let her fall. She's had her orders to descend, and she has ignored them. I am here, ready to catch her."

Zaidée, however, did not fall. She balanced herself like a robin on a tree-bough, and went on with her work.

Fernley laughed, and desisted.

"Fairly conquered," said he. "Well, go on, Miss Thorpe. So far as I can see, you are handling those choice editions very carefully."

"Yes," observed Zaidée, without looking up. "I am fond of books."

Roger Fernley looked at his aunt in surprise.

"Where on earth did you pick up this strange specimen of charwoman?" said he, in an undertone, as Miss Fernley led him out to the luncheon-table.

One or two guests dropped in before the meal was over. There was a brief symposium of claret and cigars in the little glass-roofed apartment where Miss Fernley's rare orchids grew; and when, late in the afternoon, Mr. Fernley returned to the library, the books were in exquisite condition, the glass doors of the cases shining like monster dewdrops, and the room closed and darkened.

"Why, where is the cleaning woman?" said he.

"Gone, sir," said Jones, pursing up her lips. "I carried out the chamouis cloths and the step ladder ten minutes ago."

"Who paid her?"

"Missus thought likely you did, sir."

Fernley asked one or two hurried questions.

"There seems to be a general misunderstanding all around," said he. "Where does this Morris woman live? I'll go down and settle the matter at once. She has really done the work beautifully."

Down in the little cottage at the foot of the glen, Zaidée Thorpe was shedding a few tears, for Harriet had come back and reported no market whatsoever for the plaques and mill-boards.

"They say the store windows are all crowded with them already," said she, "an' they ain't

with the stuff they're painted on. But how tired you look, Miss Zaidee, dear! Whatever have you been doing with yourself?"

Zaidee started suddenly to her feet. Through the open door opposite she saw Roger Fernley approaching, and she darted away like a bird to its covert of leaves.

"Is Miss Morris in?" he asked of the yellow-faced old woman.

"I am Miss Morris," Harriet answered.

And then, of course, everything came out.

Zaidee Thorpe was summoned, and general explanations ensued. The old crone looked reproachfully at her nursing.

"Miss Zaidee!" she ejaculated; "how could you?"

Zaidee laughed.

"Since I can't earn money by painting," said she, "I determined to earn it by house-cleaning. Didn't I do my work well, Mr. Fernley? And aren't you sorry you tried to shake me off the step-ladder?"

"To both your questions," he replied, "I answer 'yes.' May I venture to hand you the money you have so gallantly earned?"

He put the question timidly. It seemed to him almost as if he were addressing a princess. How had he ever dared to order her off the step-ladder that morning—to call her "my good woman," as if she were an apple-vendor?

But Zaidee took the money as if she were good Queen Bess receiving custom of some subject.

"I've earned it," said she. "Why should I refuse it?"

And even Harriet never knew of the tears her darling shed on her midnight pillow that night.

"I wonder," thought Zaidee, "whether he *does* despise me? No matter. What signifies it whether he does or not?"

But Mr. Fernley came back the next day to ask if Miss Thorpe could undertake to copy some old manuscripts for him. It was quite an elaborate task, and one that he would not be willing to trust to everyone. The papers were extremely valuable, and neatness of execution was absolutely necessary.

Yes, Zaidee thought she could undertake it. She liked that sort of thing, she told herself.

At first she came and went to the cottage every day, but presently Miss Fernley proposed that she should remain at the Manor.

"For greater convenience, my dear," said she. "Roger finds you invaluable in his literary affairs, and, as for me, you're all the company in the world to me, at odd times. It's a big house, Miss Thorpe, and a lonely one."

And one golden June evening Zaidee came to the cottage, where old Harriet was searching under the strawberry leaves for the first red berries.

"So you're back again, Miss Zaidee," grumbled Harriet, jealously. "I thought you'd clean forgotten me!"

"Harriet," hesitated the girl, "I've got something to say to you."

"Well, my dear, you needn't say it," said Harriet. "I know what it is. I've guessed it this long time. You're never coming back here to stay any more."

Zaidee laughed and clapped her hands.

"Wise old Harriet!" said she. "You've read the riddle. Yes, and you are to go back with me as my maid. Mrs. Fernley, of the Manor, must have her attendant, you see. Oh, Harriet, you don't know how happy I am!"

"I can guess, my dearie," said Harriet. "And it all grew out of that house-cleaning day, when I was gone to town."

"Yes," smiled Zaidee, "it all grew out of that. We none of us know, do we, what the golden key is that unlocks our happiness!"

THE common martin and the sand-martin return to us about the end of March; the redstart and whitethroat in the first week of April; the chimney-swallow and cuckoo in the second week in April; the redwing and fieldfare about the end of September; and the woodcock in the middle of October.

A CITY CLERK.

—10:—

(Continued from page 177.)

He saw a good deal of Gladys in the days that followed. He was so often at the Forbes's that he was thrown constantly into her company. She seemed to him a little graver and sadder than she had done when he was at the Priory. He wondered a little if any trouble had come to her since. She always treated him with a quiet, friendly manner, but she never laughed and talked with him as her sister did, and Jim could not feel with Gladys so perfectly at home as he did with Marguerite Forbes.

"Did you have a pleasant visit at Hetherley?" he ventured to ask her one day.

"It began pleasantly and ended miserably," she answered. "Mr. Ellerman, isn't it horrid when people will take offence? Poppy Leigh and I used to be the greatest friends imaginable; and now I don't suppose she will even invite me to her wedding."

"Well," said Mrs. Forbes, who had come in in time to hear the last sentence, "you won't lose much, Gladys. Poppy is well enough herself, but her relations are simply insufferable."

"Mr. Ellerman is one of her cousins," said Gladys wickedly, and then she went out of the room.

"I'm not going to beg your pardon," said Mrs. Forbes to Jim—"step-cousin is no relation at all—and the Leighs really are an odious family; they have treated Gladys shamefully."

"I have heard a rumour your sister would probably marry Norman Leigh."

"I daresay"—Marguerite tossed her head—"Mrs. Leigh is quite capable of saying so. The truth is, Mr. Ellerman, Poppy is the only niece one of the whole family. She and Gladys were great friends, and at one time Gladys was a good deal at the Grange; but I am quite sure she never dreamed of marrying Norman. Then Mr. Leigh wrote to the pater and asked him to take his son into the business. Cool, wasn't it?"

"Decidedly."

"Well, papa said before even considering the matter he must make the young man's acquaintance; so he asked him to spend a week at the Priory, and Norman proved to be an idle ne'er-do-well, with some taste for music, and a good deal more for horses. Papa and mamma couldn't exactly tell him to go, though his attentions to Gladys rather alarmed them; so he stayed six weeks instead of one, and then went back to Hertfordshire, followed by a letter from papa, saying he evidently had no talent for business."

"And then—"

"Oh, they asked Gladys for Christmas. It was to be Poppy's last Christmas at home. They made a point of her coming, and she went. Norman proposed to her before she went away, and threatened to blow his brains out when she refused him. All the family, including Poppy, rounded on her, and called her their dear boy's destroyer. Not a creature said good-bye to her, and she actually had to walk three miles to the station on a bitter winter's day, and leave her luggage to the mercy of the village carrier."

"It was shameful to persecute her so," answered Jim, simply; "but to anyone who could appreciate Miss Brister truly, to lose all hope of her must have been an awful blow."

"I don't believe Norman could appreciate her," said Marguerite, "he's awfully hard up, and was probably aware that, thanks to an eccentric godmother, Gladys was perfectly independent of papa. From the day she comes of age or marries, she has two thousand a-year. There are no trustees, no conditions. Papa has no power at all. If my sister liked to marry a crossing-sweeper to-morrow she would come into her income free of all control. Mr. Leigh is a solicitor and managed the affairs of Miss Thomson, the lady who left my sister this legacy. I believe he drew up the will, and there isn't the least doubt he told his son, and that was why Norman was so anxious to marry Gladys."

"It isn't like you, Mrs. Forbes, to be so dis-

trustful. Surely your sister is attractive enough to be sought for herself, not for her fortune."

"You don't know Norman Leigh, Mr. Ellerman. Why even his own aunt, dear old Mrs. Clifford, has washed her hands of him."

That night Jim Ellerman sat up long past his usual hour. There were one or two doubts he wanted to solve. Was Mrs. Forbes afraid of his falling in love with her sister. Was that why she had told him of the latter's fortune, trusting to his honour to make that a barrier between them? He thought not. Mrs. Forbes was too light hearted, too frankly outspoken to have a hidden meaning for anything she did; but none the less the truth came home to Jim, he had lost his heart a second time. He loved Gladys, not indeed with the passionate first love he had given to Emily Moss, but with a deep, reverential affection which would last his life.

"She must never know it," was the poor fellow's sad decision. "It would be the blackest ingratitude to her parents for their kindness to me in my illness—the most shameful abuse of Denis Forbes' confidence now. No, my Gladys, you must never know that you have yet another worshipper, and in the depths of his heart your father's clerk cherishes an attachment for you as fervent as it is hopeless."

But having come to this determination, Jim saw no need to absent himself from the presence of his idol; surely he could keep his secret locked in his own breast; besides, no doubt, Gladys believed him still grieving for the loss of Emily Moss.

Miss Brister was making a long stay in Paris. There were two children already in the Forbes nursery, and a third shortly expected. Marguerite had advertised in an English paper for a nursery governess, and it fell to Gladys to read the replies, and select the most suitable. Among those she did not select was one dated from Clapham and signed "Emily Moss."

Miss Gladys Brister was as romantic as a girl of seventeen. She believed Miss Moss had treated Jim shamefully; but all the same she thought his life was spoiled by regrets for her, and if he could forgive her falseness, it was not for anyone else to condemn her, so Gladys contrived that Jim should escort her to the English church the following Sunday, and coming home, they sat down to rest in one of the beautiful public gardens, and then, without any hesitation she went straight to the point.

"Mr. Ellerman, I have heard by accident something I think you would like to know; would you think me very meddlesome if I told it you, though to do so I must touch on a very painful subject?"

"I could never think you meddlesome," he answered, gravely. "Please tell me what you mean."

"Mrs. Moss is dead, and her daughter seeking a situation. You will ask me how I know. You may have heard my sister talking of her advertisement for a governess. The first reply I took up was from Miss Moss."

It was a perfect day in early May. The soft wind just fanned their faces. Jim seemed touched by the news he had just heard, but there was no eagerness or excitement in his manner.

"I liked Mrs. Moss very much. She was not very strong, and she had had an anxious life. I fear it must have been a great trial to her to leave her daughter alone in the world."

"You will forgive Miss Moss," suggested Gladys, "and go back to England to fetch her?"

Jem shook his head.

"There are some things a man can't renew, Miss Brister, and one is a broken trust. Two months ago, she wrote to me and offered to let things be as they had once been. I wrote to her then that though I forgave her freely, I could never care for her again."

A dead silence. Gladys played idly with her sunshade.

"You will think me horrid for telling you; but I thought you had never got over her loss. I thought—we all did—you would be so glad of an excuse to seek her out."

"I wish I knew anyone in England I could ask to be kind to her," said Jim, earnestly; "she

is so pretty, you see, and so unfit to take care of herself; but I have never grieved over the past since I realized my mistake. I loved an ideal of my own not the reality."

"But people don't grieve all their lives for the loss of an ideal."

"Miss Brister," said Jim, with a strange, suppressed passion in his voice, "have you ever heard of a man who gets over one blow only to receive another; and who, in his desire to keep his second trouble a secret, suffers his friends to imagine he is still mourning for the first?"

She looked at him gravely.

"I don't think anyone could love twice in vain."

"A man may fix his hopes on an object utterly unattainable."

"And you have done so?"

"Yes, but I deserve no pity. A man is only better for loving a woman worthy of the best he has to give. If things had been different, if I had been richer or the poorer, Heaven knows I would have never rested till I won her."

"Gladys! Gladys!" came the voice of Denis Forbes, as he and his tiny son joined the couple; "do you know the time? Jack and I have come to look for you in utter despair—we are nearly starving."

She made some laughing answer, but when she got home she went to her own room and shed bitter tears. She knew the truth at last. Jim loved her, but he meant her money to divide them.

The next morning Jim had a letter forwarded on from Leadenhall-street. It was from the head of an eminent firm of lawyers, and ran thus:—

"Our esteemed client, Mrs. Clifford, died last night. The funeral will be at Hetherley, next Thursday, at ten o'clock. Your presence there is requested to hear the reading of the will."

Jim decided Aunt Penelope had left him a "remembrance" for his father's sake. It came on him as an unutterable surprise to find himself master of the Croft, and its furniture, plate and jewels, and its revenue of five thousand a year.

Mrs. Clifford had left him every shilling of the Ellermans property—so the will ran. As an act of justice, her own fortune and savings were divided among her husband's kindred. The Leighs were not so much as mentioned in the will.

Jim went back to Paris, and straight to Mrs. Forbes's house.

Gladys was alone in the drawing-room. She started at the look on his face as he took her hand.

"My darling!" he said passionately; "fortune has changed. I am a rich man now. Gladys, will you marry me, although you knew me first as a City clerk?"

"I would have married you if your Aunt Penelope had not left you a shilling," she answered.

They were married in the sweet summertime. A grand wedding, which occupied three columns of the Elton paper, and was published by some other journals too, for the news of it, and of the bridegroom's enormous wealth, reached a side street in Clapham, where Milly Moss eked out a miserable livelihood as mother's help to the parent of nine small children.

Milly felt, as she gnashed her teeth in angry rage, that it would have been better for her had she kept true to her lover; or, as her poor mother used to put it, "run straight."

She never crossed Jim's path. The Ellermans live chiefly at the Croft, where Jim is as popular and respected as his grandfather before him; but they find time to pay long visits to the Priory, and to run over to Paris every year. And when they land at Dover on their return they both think of their first meeting, when Jim was only "A City Clerk."

[THE END.]

It has been estimated that a bell of common size, whose sound would penetrate a distance of three to five miles on shore, could if submerged in the sea be heard over sixty miles.

FACETIÆ.

WHEN a barber talks too much his stories are generally illustrated with cuts.

"How is your business?" asked Browne of an astronomical friend of his. "Looking up," was the reply.

"Pa," said Bertie the other day, "why do they call a ship 'she'?" "Because, my son, she is always on the look-out for the buoys."

NEW BOARDER: "I didn't sleep well last night." Mrs. Slimdick: "Strange bed, I presume." NEW BOARDER: "Yes, strangest bed I ever slept in."

JOHNNY: "Don't they use bark to tan hides with, pa?" Father: "Yes, my son; but if you ask any more questions this evening, you'll find that a slipper does just as well."

KITTY: "Isn't it remarkable how well Jack gets along on a small salary?" Tom (guardedly): "Ah, well, you see, he owes a great deal to his friends."

IN THE PARK.—"Ah, so glad to meet you, Mr. Sluff; and how is your dear wife?" Is she entertaining this season?" Mr. S.: "She seems to be—to most men."

APPLICANT: "I think you will find some stability about me, sir." Business man: "What business have you been in?" "Taking care of horses."

OLD GENTLEMAN: "How am I to know that you are not marrying my daughter for my money?" Suitor: "And how am I to know that you won't fail inside of a year?"

"I HOPE you will learn more this year than you did last," remarked the teacher. "That'll be hard," said Francis, "cause last year had one day more than this."

MISS ELDER: "I think it was real mean in you to tell Mr. Soatts I was twenty-eight years old." Miss Fosdick: "Why, surely you didn't want me to tell him how old you really were?"

FIRST BURGLAR: "What, back so soon, Bill? What did you get?" Second Burglar: "Nothin'—we're too late—there's a receipted lawyer's bill a-lying on the table!"

FRESHENS: "Which do you prefer for your button-hole, a chrysanthemum or a green carnation?" CINCINUS: "A button, whenever I can get my wife to sew one on."

MRS. BINGO: "Dear, after this you must wear a dress suit down to dinner." Bingo: "What for?" Mrs. Bingo: "Our new house-maid has been used to it."

"I'LL never send a manuscript of another novel to a woman typewriter," said Chapters. "Why not?" "The last time I tried it she copied the last chapter first."

"WHY did you set your cup of tea on the chair, Mr. James?" asked a worthy landlady one morning at breakfast. "It is so very weak, ma'am," replied Mr. James. "I thought I would let it rest."

CHOLLY: "Do you ever have moments when you feel like doing something absurd?" Myrtylla: "Yes, indeed. Why, when you proposed to me last I felt for a moment like accepting you."

BLUMER: "You haven't another cigar like the one you gave me the other day, have you?" Cabbage: "Yes; here's one." Blumer: "Thanks, old man. I'm trying to break my boy of smoking."

ANGRY FATHER: "Here you! Get up! It's daylight long ago!" Sleepy Son: "Y-e-s." Angry Father: "It's strange you can't make up your mind to get up." Sleepy Son: "Mind's all right. (Yawns.) It's my body I can't make up."

A WITTY as well as a soft answer will sometimes turn away wrath. Charles Burleigh, the Abolitionist, in the midst of an anti-slavery speech, was struck by a rotten egg full in the face. Pausing to wipe away the contents of the missile, he said, calmly, "I have always contended pro-slavery arguments were very unsound." The crowd roared, and he was no longer molested.

BIFFERS: "You are not looking well, old man." Tiffers: "I am not well, not at all well. I have been to the doctor a dozen times, but it hasn't done a particle of good." "Did you follow his advice?" "N-o, but I paid his bill."

MISS FISHER: "I really don't think I shall take part again in theatricals. I always feel as though I were making a fool of myself." Piking (who always says the wrong thing): "Oh, everybody thinks that."

A STUMP orator declared that he wanted the wings of a bird to fly to every village and hamlet in the broad land; but he collapsed when a man in the crowd cried out: "You'd get shot for a goose before you flew a mile."

BASS: "What is wanted is a law that's flexible, one that won't hurt me, but will ruin the other fellow." Fogg: "Why, man, we have it now; all that's needed is to get the right kind of a lawyer on your side."

"Did you see a pair of sandals in the closet, Nora?" "Sure, I saw a pair of rubbers, mum, but they had such a big hole in the heels that I threw them away. Sure, no lady would wear them!"

A CYNICAL old bachelor said: "Ideas are like beards; nobody ever has any till he's grown up." "And how is it with women?" asked a lady; "they never have any beards at all." "Nor ideas neither," answered the ruffianly old bachelor.

FIRE ESCAPE AGENT.—"If you will put up our fire escapes I will guarantee that you can get an audience out of the theatre in three minutes." Theatrical Manager: "Don't want it. If you have a device that will get an audience into the theatre I'll buy it."

PHRENOLOGIST: "Your bump of imagination is abnormally large, sir. You should write poetry." Visitor: "I do write poetry. Only yesterday I took a spring poem to an editor, and that bump you are feeling is where he hit me. Don't bear on it so hard."

His wife went away for a birthday visit to her mother, and he gave her exactly the cost of her fare back and forth. "But I won't have anything to spend while I'm there," objected his wife. "Yes, you will," answered the wretch, "you'll have your birthday to spend."

A RECRUIT was brought up for medical inspection, and the doctor asked him: "Have you any defects?" "Yes, sir; I am short-sighted." "How can you prove it?" "Easily enough, doctor. Do you see that nail up yonder in the wall?" "Yes." "Well, I don't."

THE man who sings out "Chestnut!" at the second sentence of every good story you tell him is bad enough, but he isn't half so exasperating as the smiling hypocrite who will let him go through all the details of a side-splitting narrative, and then at the end say, with an imbecile grin: "Yes, I always did like that story."

"MY DEAR," said a fond father to his fashionable daughter, who is soon to be married, "if George should at some future time meet with reverses, and his fortune should be swept away, which occasionally occurs in silver mine speculators, could you meet the emergency? Could you, for instance, go into the kitchen and make a loaf of bread?" "What a foolish papa," replied the girl, brightly. "Why I would send to the baker's for it!"

HERE is Thackeray's version of his first meeting with Charlotte Brontë. The tiny, intense creature had idealised Thackeray, personally unknown to her, with a passion of idealisation. "Behold, a lion cometh out of the North!" she quoted, under her breath, as Thackeray entered the drawing-room. Some one repeated it to him. "O Lord!" said Thackeray; "I am nothing but a poor devil of an Englishman, ravenous for my dinner!" At dinner, Miss Brontë was placed opposite Thackeray by her own request. "And I had," said he, "the miserable humiliation of seeing her ideal of me disappearing down my own throat, as everything went into my mouth and nothing came out of it; until at last, as I took my fifth potato, she leaned across, with clasped hands, and tears in her eyes, and breathed imploringly: 'Oh, Mr. Thackeray! Don't!'"

SOCIETY.

A GARDEN party at Buckingham Palace is now almost a foregone conclusion.

A PARIS sculptor says that the day will come when women will be ashamed of too small hands.

ALL German workmen in Russian Poland have been ordered to learn the Russian language by January, 1894.

HER Majesty is extremely fond of powdered cinnamon, and has generally a bowl of it on a table at her side.

JEAN INGELow is a great lover of flowers with whose nature and habits she is well acquainted. She spends hours of every summer-day working in her garden.

THE Khan of Khelat has been deposed, and the territory has become virtually annexed to our Indian possessions.

THE Duke of York has been a great deal with his fair fiancée since the engagement, and is not only most devoted but most happy and bright now that it is all settled.

THOUGH he could not be present, as he wished, at the ceremony of opening the Imperial Institute, the Gankwar of Barodah will shortly visit England again.

HER Majesty's service of gold plate, which is always used at banquets held in St. George's Hall, is unequalled throughout the world either by the plate of sovereign or subject.

PRINCESS LOUISE (the Marchioness of Lorne) is an adept at sculpture. She has recently been devoting her attention to animals, and has made some very successful pieces of sculpture from living models.

HER Majesty has directed Dr. Randall Davidson, Bishop of Rochester, to make all the religious arrangements for the forthcoming Royal wedding, which ceremony is to be performed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primate of all England.

GENTLEMEN were not allowed to walk in Kensington Gardens without donning white kid gloves and a white tie in the reign of George IV. At that period, too, pet dogs and servants in livery were not allowed in the Park.

THE Royal wedding is to take place in July, either in London or at Kew Church, where the bride's mother was married twenty-seven years ago. If the ceremony is in London it will be in the private chapel at Buckingham Palace, on very much the same lines as the marriage of the Duke and Duchess of Fife.

THE Czar has, perhaps, more medical attendants than any other potentate in Europe. He has three Court physicians and twelve honorary ones, two Court surgeons with four honorary ones, two oculists, one aurist, one dentist, one specialist for children, with other doctors to attend upon his suite.

It has been cleverly suggested that, with the wedding invitation, the name and address of the principal bridesmaid should be given, and that intending donors should communicate with her as to what presents have already been received, and what others are particularly desired.

THE gold used for the handle of the key for the Imperial Institute comes from South Africa, that for the stem from British Columbia, that for the wreath and leaves round the stem from Victoria. Queensland sends the precious metal for the "bit." The silver comes from the Broken Hill Mines, the diamonds from South Africa, the rubies from Burma, and the pearls from Ceylon. On the obverse is the Star of India set in very fine brilliants, the centre one being a picked stone from the De Beers Mine above the Royal coat-of-arms. On the reverse is the Star of St. Michael and St. George in enamel, set in fine gold, with the motto *Auspicious melioris ævi* pierced out of the solid metal. Bow and stern have each their own inscription redolent of Empire. Several loose ends of jewellery, crowns, orbs and sceptres lie about the case, and are available for detached use.

STATISTICS.

THERE are over 300 golf clubs in existence.

TEN thousand of the Sultan of Turkey's subjects are deaf and dumb.

OF 184,382 received into the German army and navy recently, only 824 could not read or write.

THERE are 109,000 locomotives in the world. 63,000 of them run in Europe, 40,000 in America, 3,300 in Asia, 2,000 in Australia, and 700 in Africa.

It is computed that if the traffic of the City of London were to be despatched by a procession of trains, each with the engine touching the preceding guard's van, as far as Liverpool and back, the first to return to Euston would find 214,000 persons waiting to start.

GEMS.

EVERY wife scolding her husband adds a wrinkle to her face.

DON'T experiment with folly. No man ever did without burning his fingers.

DEGENERATION begins when the point is reached where one is thoroughly satisfied with himself or his attainments.

GET as much force of mind as you can. Live within your income. Always have something saved at the end of the year. Let your imports be more than your exports, and you'll never go far wrong.

A MAN that only translates will never be a poet; nor a painter that only copies; nor a swimmer that swims only with bladders; so people that trust wholly to others' charity, and are without industry of their own, will always be poor.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

KIPPERED SALMON.—Split and scale the fish, but don't wash it. Mix together one dessert-spoon of salt and one of sugar, one teaspoonful of salt-petre and Jamaica pepper. Rub the fish thoroughly with this mixture; place it between two boards under a weight for three days; stretch it out then with skewers, and hang it up to dry.

SALMON SALAD.—Take two pounds of cold boiled salmon, remove the skin and bone, break the fish in pieces, and put into a bowl with a little salt, cayenne, vinegar, the juice of a lemon and a tablespoonful of oil. Let stand on ice one hour. Put crisp lettuce leaves in a salad bowl, add the salmon, pour over a mayonnaise dressing, garnish with olives, and serve very cold. Canned salmon may be used in making this salad.

COLD TONGUE.—A simple and easy way to prepare a little cold tongue is in a case or soufflé dish. Cut the tongue in very thin slices after peeling it, and then in very small bits. Put a layer of thick tomato sauce in the bottom of the case, and fill it up with bits of the tongue. Add a mere pinch of cayenne pepper, a pinch of minced parsley, and also of minced chives. Put a layer of the tomato sauce also on top. Sprinkle a few fine bread crumbs on top of each dish, and bake them in a hot oven for about ten or fifteen minutes.

CHEESE CAKES.—Line some small patty pans with paste—6oz. of flour made into paste does for one dozen—then take the following mixture:— $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. flour, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. sugar, 2oz. butter, 2 eggs, 2 tablespoons milk, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking powder, a little essence of lemon. Put the butter and sugar in a basin, and mix it with a spoon till it looks creamy, then beat up the eggs well, and stir them in; then add the milk, the flour, and baking powder and essence; give all a good mixing; divide this among the pans; cut a strip of paste and twist it on the top, and bake about 15 or 20 minutes.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE Japanese never mix different varieties of flowers together in one vase.

WINE is frequently used instead of water in Spain in mixing shoe-blackening.

CRUCIFIXION is the method of sacrifice adopted in the Benin country on the west coast of Africa.

THE number of volleys fired over a soldier's grave depends upon the number of companies in the regiment, each company firing one volley.

THE forests of Australia are remarkable in being the hottest parts of the continent, from the fact that the trees keep away the breeze, while they do not keep off the sun.

THE diamond is not among the earliest gems known to man. It has not been found in the ruins of Nineveh, in the Etruscan sepulchres, nor in the tombs of the Phœnicians.

THE people of Rome get their supply of water, which is remarkably pure, from the Apennines through an aqueduct that was constructed two thousand years ago.

THERE is a tribe in Central Africa, among whom speakers in public debates are required to stand on one leg while speaking, and to speak only as long as they can so stand.

SEVEN London-built coaches and 60 English horses, together with professional drivers and guards, are to be taken to Chicago to ply between the principal hotels and the Exhibition there during the Fair.

It is a strange fact that sea-fowls' eggs are almost conical in form, so that they will only roll in a circle. As many of them are laid on the bare edges of high rocks, this provision of nature prevents them from rolling off.

IN the reign of Queen Elizabeth, if bad fish was sold to the poor, the knavish fishmonger was decorated with a necklace of his unsavoury commodity, and was then perched on a stand in the market.

It is getting to be the fashion to address and stamp envelopes on the back. With the direction written across the folds, the letter cannot be opened by an unauthorised person without the fact being detected.

LOST children in Japan do not long remain astray. It is the custom for parents to label their children with their addresses, so that in case they wander any wayfarer may send them home.

ENOUGH diamonds to load two large coal trains, and having a total weight of fifty million carats, the valuation of three hundred and fifty million dollars, have been taken out of the Cape diamond fields since their discovery in 1867.

AT the Royal Library in Berlin is a collection of ear-trumpets and other instruments used by the great composer Beethoven in his futile attempts to overcome the deafness which assailed him in 1797, and rendered him incapable of hearing for 30 years.

IN Iceland, that country of gentle and old-fashioned customs, it has always been the fashion to present to the baby, when its first tooth appeared, a lamb, to be its very own, cared for and tended as no other pet could be, and never to be parted with.

A CONTRIVANCE to enable compositors to set type simultaneously with both hands has been invented. It is a mechanical "stick," connected with a funnel, into which the types are dropped face upward. The mechanism turns the types so that they will all properly line. The inventor claims that his "stick" will increase the compositor's work from 35 to 50 per cent.

MUCH is expected of the use of electricity to deaden sensibility in teeth that are to be filled or extracted. As to extraction, it is announced that already the use of an electric current delivered through electrodes containing cotton saturated with cocaine or ether has produced complete local anaesthesia so that teeth have been extracted without pain.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

L. M.—You must consult a physician.
EDGAR.—The cost will not be much.
M. O.—Imprisonment in such cases is abolished.
HYACINTH.—Moonstone is a variety of felspar.
INCOG.—We have never heard of such articles.
M. S.—The story has not appeared in book form.
META.—We never give trade addresses in our columns.
A LOVER OF THE SEA.—Forms for what?—However, apply to the Company's Offices.
NINA.—If the marriage was legally performed, the circumstances you mention would not undo it.
CONSTANT READER.—We should certainly think the landlord could do so.
PRIMROSE.—Address a letter to the hon. Secretary at the hospital.
HORTENSE.—The gentlemen present would generally hand the oaks, etc.
HOPELESS.—Apply at once to a physician, and get him to examine you.
GRINDER.—The slightest rust on the wheel would spoil the whole article.
MAY.—The loss of the hair is probably due to weak health.
BARON.—The mechanism of the weather-glass is evidently out of order.
MUSICIAN.—The piano was invented by Christofori in the year 1711.
A CONSTANT READER.—Electrical arts may be said to be virtually only about twenty years old.
SIMPLICITY.—The words applied to doctors of philosophy, not to doctors of medicine.
HAROLD.—There have been about fourteen bills introduced at various times concerning the liquor traffic.
FIGARO.—If smoking affects you to such a degree, why do you not give up the practice?
THRISTLE.—The document seems to have been quite formal and complete, therefore binding.
PRIMA FACIE.—The earl, used in estimating the weight of gems, is a grain of Indian wheat.
PENPLEXED.—It is an easy thing to go to law, but always difficult to come back again unscathed.
JACK'S PET.—To present a bunch of mass rosebuds and myrtle is a confession of love.
FRISCHILLA.—Jellies exposed to the air to cool off are said to absorb the poisonous germs aloft.
PLANTATION.—No; the death of the father puts an end to the matter, and there is no remedy.
OLD SOLDIER.—If the man dies before pension day comes round no pension is due for the quarter.
STAFF OF LIFE.—It is said that warm weather decreases the consumption of bread by about one-fifth.
DIVINE.—There has been no coin of the description in circulation during the reign of her present Majesty.
PORTIA.—Black crape is improved by being sprinkled with brandy and stretched over wooden rollers.
J. G. P.—Detectives are selected from among the men already in the force who display aptitude for the profession.
PATER.—You are bound to keep your son at school until he has satisfied the educational requirements of the Board.
IGNORANT.—The proper thing is for you to hunt out the answer in any British history in your library, beginning with Norman William.
FASHION.—New hats have fairly wide brims, and are pinched up, rolled up, twisted up, and turned up in every imaginable shape.
ACACIA.—The blushing is a silly habit, brought on by thinking too much of yourself, and it rests entirely with you whether you get rid of it or not.
GLADSTONIAN.—The perfectly round pearls are the most valuable; next come the pear-shaped, and lastly the egg-shaped.
DISTRESSED.—Baths the lids in cold water night and morning, and protect the eyes from the sun and cold winds by wearing tinted glasses.
LITERARY.—Each magazine has its own standard. Like everything else, authorship to be made pay requires talent, practice, and patience.
ARTHUR'S LOVE.—You cannot legally marry without your mother's consent until you are twenty-one. You would be asked your age, and if you answered untruthly you would be punished.
"SHE."—The halcyon days are the seven days before and the seven days after the shortest day. The halcyon, or kingfisher, is supposed to be breeding at this time, for which reason the sea, for this fortnight, very considerably preserves a perfect calm.
BIDDY.—Probably the following will answer your purpose:—Take two and a half pounds of good hops and two gallons of boiling water (perfectly distilled). Macerate (or steep) the hops in water for twenty-four hours, then boil to a gallon and strain while hot. If found too bitter add boiling water to taste before bottling.

ONIX.—Lord Palmerston was Premier in his eighty-first year, Lord John Russell when seventy-four years old, and Lord Beaconsfield when seventy-one years.

DESPAIRING JACK.—No steps available to you; the money is lost, the man you dealt with being a common swindler.

RECKFUL.—It is a pity you left the hospital, and the best thing you can do is to get admitted again as soon as possible.

IN DOUBT.—If you are inclined to be stout, of course dark colours are best, as nothing lessens a person's size so much as black, or navy blue.

LITTLE DORRITT.—The best plan is to have it washed with soft warm water and good soap about once a fortnight, well dried, and polished with a soft cloth.

MEO.—If you are wise, you will endeavour to be content as nature has made you, and not be silly enough to waste your money on any such tomfoolery.

ROBERT.—Washing the hands in pure cold water in which you have put a little powdered alum or borax will remedy the tendency to perspire.

ANOTHER.—Twenty-two thousand aliens came to the United Kingdom last year for permanent settlement—six thousand fewer than in 1891.

M. D.—Arrange with the best physician in your neighbourhood to begin your studies with him, and he will tell you how to proceed.

A WELL-WISHER.—There were total eclipses of the sun in 1886 and 1890, neither, however, being seen in this country; the first of the two was most complete and best observed; the second was seen well in Spain.

WHAT WAS I TO DO?

Years ago I had a lover,
 Handsome, young and gay;
 But alas! he proved a rover,
 And one summer's day,
 Midst the bloom of flowers, we parted,
 Vowing to be true;
 Then for distant shores he started,
 What was I to do?

Time passed by, yet often bringing
 Tender misgivings sweet,
 O'er my heart love's bondage flinging,
 Chaining me complete.
 Round and round time's wheel kept turning,
 Till a gentle dow
 Quenched the fire so fiercely burning,
 What was I to do?

Then long years of silence proving
 To my lonely heart
 That my lover still was roving,
 Cured of Cupid's smart;
 So when others came a wooing
 (There was one or two),
 I would listen to their suing,
 What was I to do?

Now when silver threads are gleaming
 Midst the locks of gold,
 And my heart has ceased its dreaming,
 With love's story told,
 Comes my lover through the gloaming,
 Not, ah! I, too, to woo;
 For he found a wife while roaming,
 And—I'm married, too.

C. W. B.

ANNOYED.—No outward application will remove pimples from the face if your health is in bad order, as they come from internal derangement, and acidity of stomach.

ATKINS.—You are too old to join as a boy, and not old enough to be acceptable as a man; neither is your chest measurement up to the standard; you must wait two years longer.

HYMEN.—The bridegroom gives presents to the bride and her mother, usually; both should properly be articles of dress, but the selection must depend upon the bridegroom's means.

DANDY.—We certainly cannot recommend you to use artificial means to force the growth of the hair. Besides, a moustache does not always improve the look of the face.

HERMAN.—The only method is by the knife, and as the scar left by the operation is quite as unsightly as the original spot, we cannot see what advantage there is in having it done.

LYDIA.—There does not exist a safe and efficacious lotion for the prevention of the growth of hair on the face; the electric needle, which destroys the roots, is the one only extirpator.

W. S.—It is customary to let the solicitor keep the deeds because he locks them up in a safe, but he is not at liberty to retain them against your will if you prefer to have them.

ARCHIE.—If you have a good gymnasium in your vicinity, take a short course there and get the rudimentary training. Having that, you can quite as well go on by yourself.

BASIL.—Where they are first mentioned in sacred history is in the description of the Temple in Ezekiel (p. c. 574). Neither the Egyptians nor the Greeks were acquainted with the arch, and for its general use the world is indebted to the Romans.

IN TROUBLE.—To be impeached is the same as to be accused or indicted. But it does not necessarily follow because a man has been impeached or indicted that he is guilty of any crime.

YOUNG WIFE.—Beeswax and turpentine—a little wax melted in the turpentine, say half-an-ounce of wax to a gill of the spirit—is the best polish. It should be applied while soft, and well rubbed up with a twill rag.

INQUIRER.—The Queen's head always looks to the left and her predecessor to the right. Ever since James II., each successive sovereign looks in the opposite direction to the one that immediately preceded.

PRIMROSE.—One of the best and one that preserves the flavour is to boil the cider briskly for twenty or thirty minutes; then, while hot, bottle and seal. If boiled down about one-quarter, it will keep a long time, if bottled when cold.

MILTON.—A "financier" is one who deals with the investment of money, but it is not always easy to draw a line between the financier who handles money only and the merchant who handles goods, representing money's worth.

JESSICA.—A physician of experience has said, don't always be guided by your feelings in the matter of exercise, for when one feels like taking exercise the least, that is just the time he generally needs to take it the most.

SWEET SIXTEEN.—We cannot give you a receipt for making lanoline. It is extracted from the wool of sheep by a most elaborate chemical process, so that the plant for the purpose is costly, and you would require to be a manufacturing chemist to manage the plant properly.

LITTLE HOUSEKEEPER.—Fish for frying should be perfectly dry. Let it lie for a little while in a soft cloth, and then dredge with flour, brush over with a well-beaten egg, which prevents the juices from escaping and the fat from penetrating, and stew with fine bread-crumbs.

EMIGRANT.—New Zealand is the best of your three selections; small capitalists are in request there just now, and if you write to the Agent-General for New Zealand, Westminster Chambers, 13, Victoria-street, London, S.W., you will get all the information you require.

YRMA.—Boil 1 lb. of bran in four breakfast cups of water for half an hour, then strain it through a towel. Use this to wash the scalp, and no soap or any other thing; rinse and dry in the usual way, then iron carefully. The hair softens as well as cleanses.

JACK.—First clean the tripe well in the ordinary fashion; then plunge it in a tub of water, to which has been added half-a-pound of quicklime to every gallon. Allow it to lie in this for twelve hours; then take it out, scrape off any black skin adhering, and well rinse in cold water. Boil in milk, or salt and water, and it is ready to serve.

MORTIMER.—The guinea was originally worth only 20s. The value of the coin varied considerably at different times. Thus in 1663, when it was first coined, it was valued at 30s. In 1696 it was worth 30s., while in 1717 it had been reduced to 22s. In 1810 guineas fetched 22s. 6d., while six years later their price had gone up to 27s. Guineas have not been coined since July 1, 1817.

HELENA.—One of the best ways to improve your spelling is to keep with you a pencil and small pad. Whenever you think of a word, and have the opportunity, write it. After a time, consult the dictionary. Most words should be written over again and again. In this way you will, after a while, be able to detect immediately the wrong spelling of a word.

INTERESTED.—In all probability there will be an autumn session to give the Upper House a second opportunity to discuss the measure; should they throw it out again, Government may advise the Queen to create enough peers to pass the bill next year when it is sent up a third time, or Mr. Gladstone may come to the country in a general election for power to deal with the Lords in another way.

MINERVA.—It is hard for anyone to be regulated by any set rules of etiquette. A young lady, in particular, who sees no harm in accepting certain presents from gentlemen admirers, may be lectured by her family or friends for receiving any rich tokens of good opinion or regard. Of course all pecuniary obligations to gentlemen should be avoided. The gentleman may not see any impropriety in proffering attentions involving a considerable outlay of money, but it is safer for the young lady to refuse them, and avoid every occasion in the future to appear to be willing to receive them.

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